



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

PROPERTY OF THE

*University of
Michigan
Libraries*

1817



ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

30

810.9
T72

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

BY

HARRY AUBREY TOULMIN, JR.

*Member of the American Academy of Political and
Social Science, of the American Political Science
Association, and of the Virginia
Historical Society*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

CHARLES W. KENT

*Professor of English Literature in the
University of Virginia*



RICHARD G. BADGER

THE GORHAM PRESS

BOSTON

8/2.9

COPYRIGHT, 1911
BY HARRY AUBREY TOULMIN, JR.

All Rights Reserved

THE GORHAM PRESS, BOSTON, U. S. A.

Oct 8th 1913 G.F.

TO
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

250400

INTRODUCTION

THE South with its romance, first, of political power and, then, of defeat and sorrow has always attracted attention, but never more so than now when to its unique and absorbing history it has added a marvelous resiliency and a regnant optimism. It seems now on the eve of unprecedented prosperity. Coincident with this good fortune of slow but assured growth, there has come an unexpected and surprising political upheaval that has suddenly thrust Southern men, and specifically University of Virginia men, into conspicuous leadership and power. Our interest, therefore, inevitably and instinctively turns from the past with its determined record to the immediate future with its unusual opportunities and unsolved problems. "What will the South do with them?" is the question uttered or unformulated;

INTRODUCTION

and to this question, the answer not of conjecture but of fact is anxiously awaited.

While we wait we are not remiss in inquiring into the recent history of the South and especially into its social upheavals and readjustments and its present condition. Of these things history has comparatively little to say ; for history delays until the passage of time shall have thrown into clear relief the life it records. By that time the events of significance have become separated from the conditions that made them possible and seen in perspective are so prominent and important that they alone seem worthy of preservation. It is for this reason that we constantly revert to contemporary letters and diaries and biographies and, especially, fiction for the right revelation of the social and domestic life of the people.

But success in giving a true value to this intimate, personal, and moulding element of our literature depends, in the last analysis, upon the knowledge and sympathy of these writers. This knowledge and sympathy must not be the result of a detached and objective study ; however con-

INTRODUCTION

trolled this may be by calm and even justice or however directed to a right understanding. On the contrary any true picture must come from intimate knowledge and sympathy based upon personal experience and long associations. In so far as writers are the legitimate spokesmen for their people, in so far are they protected from misrepresentations and authorized to speak without any reserve save that dictated by good taste.

But there is at least one other requirement for writers who essay interpretations of life in a community or section, or, for that matter, any interpretation at all, and that is that besides being intelligent and appreciative they must be skillful in utterance.

It would, indeed, be difficult to find a group of writers more fully meeting these conditions than these "Social Historians" as they are aptly called by Mr. Toulmin. They are all writers of keen and penetrating intelligence, and of distinct and noteworthy ability and talent. With possibly one exception, they are intimately sympathetic and frankly appreciative in their work. Their

INTRODUCTION

writings are none the less sound and reliable because fascinating in literary structure and finish; and from them may readily be had a true and adequate picture of the life they so skillfully portray.

Moreover the South is so imperial in its territorial sweep that there is little overlapping in the regions or classes covered by these writers. On the contrary they supplement one another, though all of them together do not fully represent this whole section. They are, however, thoroughly representative in character and afford abundant material for sound conclusions. The judgments of Mr. Toulmin may not always be accepted in full, but they are based on first-hand consideration of the books under discussion and supported by well-grounded reasons.

It is a source of great pride and pleasure that our young men are becoming more and more interested in our American writers, and that out of our colleges and universities are coming intelligent and enthusiastic students of present-day conditions and literature. Mr. Toulmin, at present a student

INTRODUCTION

in the University of Virginia, has commended himself by his maturity of thought, force of intellect, and earnest interest in the things of the mind. Though he has elected to follow an exacting profession, the Law, he may yet achieve in the realm of literary criticism that larger success of which this first volume is a promise and prediction.

CHARLES W. KENT.

April 13th, 1911.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
THOMAS NELSON PAGE	1
GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE	35
CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK	59
JAMES LANE ALLEN	101
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS	133
BIBLIOGRAPHY	167
APPENDIX	173

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

*“ Go ! read the patent of thine heritage,
Inscribed in glowing words that flash and burn
With pregnant import. Con it well and learn
The thrilling tale that lights the storied page.”*

IT is primarily Virginia and things Virginian that Thomas Nelson Page has devoted his efforts to portray. Born on the old plantation of Oaklands in Hanover County on the twenty-third of April, 1853, he was enabled to attain sufficient age to appreciate the subsequent series of the war time incidents and become imbued with the life of the ante-bellum regime; “an old Virginia home recalled from memory stamped with it when it was yet a virgin page,” perhaps, aptly describes in the author’s own expression his opportunity for an insight into the scenes of yesterday that he has so fittingly revived. The families of Nelson and Page have been for decades leaders in the development of the

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

state, moulding her policy in times of peace and sending defenders of her borders to the front in successive generations. Generals, governors, statesmen, politicians and soldiers have come from the long lines of these illustrious families. No wonder young Page developed a passion for his boyhood home and life; the life his ancestors had moulded on plantation and in state; a life whose policy of government and scheme of society owed so much to the genius of their creative powers.

It was fitting that he should enter the university sponsored by Washington and endowed by the lofty spirit of the great commander — Lee. Thomas Nelson Page entered this university in 1869 and remained until 1872; thereafter he spent some time in Kentucky, when he suddenly decided to enroll in the department of law at the University of Virginia in 1873, thus becoming a member of the class of that year. Here he sat under John B. Minor, who "taught him how to work," and graduated in a little over one-half the allotted time of two years.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

While at these universities he exhibited considerable aptitude for writing; frequent contributions of his were published in the university magazines, he himself becoming editor of the Washington and Lee journal during his last year there.

The South has had no illustrious historian to conceive and execute a narrative worthy to stand as an impartial record of her career. Notwithstanding, the South has had the great forerunners of such a narrative in the brilliant series of men whose contributions to literature have enlightened the phases of the departed life and policy. The scenes of "Two Old Colonial Places" and "Life in Colonial Virginia" are laid amid the glories of the days of the distinguished families who were the progenitors of the author; he writes with feeling of the stately mansions of his forefathers, of their life and manners, of the Colonial period wafting back "a breath out of a distant time, an odor of neglected gardens." He betrays the loving recollections of days gone by and the memory of the grandeur to which the men of so long ago attained.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

The scene is transferred from the faces and figures of Colonial prosperity to the chivalrous life of "Before the War" in the heyday of Southern splendor and in magnificence of the baronial land owners. As a study of penetration and insight into the spirit of the period, must be the judgment pronounced upon "The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock," and particularly upon its companion in this division of his work, "Social Life Before the War." There is a pride of race and love of home animating every line of these delightful sketches. The forms of yesterday rise to laugh and chatter, to ride their famous horses through the sinuous byways and paths of the nearly virgin woodland and to discuss the future of government, politics and law. It is with things intimately connected with his home land and native state that Page has seen fit to deal; and his extensive experience and close association with actual occurrences has enabled him to portray his theme more than passing well.

Thomas Nelson Page has pictured the life of the Colonial aristocracy of old Hanover county

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

in the days of the Nelsons and Pages; he has touched with pathos and love the glorious realm of ante-bellum prosperity; he has treated with deep feeling the sufferings of his home and people amid the hostilities of contending armies. He has gone further, he has grasped the ideas thereafter and the policy for the future. Amid all this he is Virginian, speaking in the manner and way of the Virginia gentleman as he is, courteous, kindly, with a gift of humor and a capacity for story telling that is modest, well-bred, never bitter, a man of large heart and ample views.

The most puissant individualism of Mr. Page is his devotion to the actual incidents of his scenes. Nowhere has the function of these so-called *social historians* been more prominent than in the semi-historical sketches of colonial and ante-bellum life. Essays or rambling stories of pathos and fine good nature they may be, yet each one contributes its quota of reminiscence. The veracity with which the scenes are depicted is a paramount consideration; he declares for it in his introduction, and his stories ably support his claim.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

In the small volume, *Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War*, Page has won his case. There is abundant proof that he possesses admirable knowledge and experience from which to draw a profoundly interesting sketch. A fearless sincerity matched against a potent sympathy balances the scale in such measure as to insure accuracy as well as freedom from prejudice. What is true of this particular essay can be said of the major portion of his work. Amidst the contending factions of fact and fancy, he has skillfully maintained his poise. As Matthew Arnold remarked of *Anna Karenina* that we are not to understand it "As a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life"; in a similar attitude the efforts of Page should be viewed. He has, however, like Tolstoi, a claim to both.

The attraction on reading this account of social life in Virginia in ante-bellum times may be at first insensible. The charm is gradual, but none the less efficacious when it finally takes full possession. The melody of the harvest songs drifts back with a whiff of that olden time; the cadence

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

of "Cool Water" clings like an echo in the memory of all who read. You find yourself becoming an ardent adherent of that dominion of the past where the manor house was a home supreme "enthroned in perpetual tranquillity." It is pleasing to think that the charm of those bygone days has not been dissipated on the winds or now rests forever alone in a musty record on the dusty bookshelves of a chance collector. The melody of forgotten hours has floated down the decades in the hearts of the Southern people giving them, perhaps, something of a greater sensibility to gayety, wider receptiveness in matters of sympathy. The complete record lies in this short sketch.

That the record is not as perfect as he would wish, the author regretfully concedes. In the nature of things it could not be so. His service as a chronicler of the past is not less important. A full idea is obtained of the amleness and the refinement of this genuinely wholesome existence in a manner that can scarce be found elsewhere, from this tale of the "People whose fortitude in defeat

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

has ever been more splendid than their valor in war," as also of the character of their life before that appalling disaster, which exhibited examples worthy of emulation in these modern days of rushing materialism, domestic infelicity and marital discord. In his concluding sentence of this book Mr. Page remarks: "The ivory palaces have been destroyed, but myrrh, aloes, and cassia still breathe amid their dismantled ruins." Chiefest of its virtues lay in being a life without show or pretence.

"In Ole Virginia" is an epic in dialect literature. Whether as a creation or a portrayal, as you will, the series of stories beginning with the famous "Mars' Chan" stands preëminently a production of consummate workmanship and infinite skill of handling. It is upon these several papers bearing the breath of a life gone to join the shades of the actors once in its scenes, that the fame of Page has long rested. The author extracts the essence of romance and picturesqueness from the existence he has known, relates it in an intricate dialect that reveals the homely philoso-

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

phy of a departing type. It is vitally human and the humanity is powerfully felt.

The celebrated "Mars' Chan" had a most uncommon origin as expressed in the author's own words. "Just then a friend showed me a letter which had been written by a young girl to her sweetheart in a Georgia regiment, telling him that she had discovered that she loved him, after all, and that if he would get a furlough and come home she would marry him; that she had loved him ever since they had gone to school together in the little schoolhouse in the woods. Then, as if she feared such a temptation might be too strong for him, she added a postscript in these words: 'Don't come without a furlough; for if you don't come honorable, I won't marry you.' This letter had been taken from the pocket of a private dead on the battlefield of one of the battles around Richmond, and, as the date was only a week before the battle occurred, its pathos struck me very much. I remember I said: 'The poor fellow got his furlough through a bullet.' The idea remained with me, and I went to my office one morn-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ing and began to write 'Mars' Chan,' which was finished in about a week.

It is a story of both battlefield and crucifix. Above all it may claim to be a powerful homily on the justice of divine arrangement, on the conception that there is indeed that refuge called the "Peace of God." This tragedy does what voluminous sermons or labored theological treatises, or the dogmas of many creeds fail to do. It holds concretely, within the confines of flesh and blood, the reasonableness of belief in such refuge of perpetual felicity. Faith, devotion, love, — a trinity to support the world, are all intrinsic parts of *Mars' Chan*.

While old black Sam does not play a title rôle, he is, nevertheless, the unconscious hero. Such devotion as he exhibits in those few short pages would do ample credit to hosts of those of far greater pretension and claim to gentility. He demonstrated that he was devoted in a practical manner. Sam was evidently a finished diplomat by nature. His was a master hand that brought about a reconciliation between *Mars' Chan's* fam-

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

ily and *Cun'l Chamb'lin*, when he had a letter written to the black maid of Miss Anne relating the incident of Mr. Ronny's punishment at the hands of *Mars' Chan* for a slighting remark at the expense of *Cun'l Chamb'lin*. The wily diplomat knew, of course, that his black correspondent could no more read than he could write and the contents would have to be read to her by Miss Anne. He was a success as a matchmaker, as witnessed by his results.

Sam managed to relieve the tragedy of *Mars' Chan's* impending death in the gallant charge of his troops by first explaining his own escape while riding manfully with his master. His horse was shot from under him and he rolled against a protecting bank. In explanation he insisted, "Judy she say she think 'twuz Providence, but I think 'twuz de bank. O' co'se, Providence put de bank dyah, but how come Providence nuver saved Mars' Chan?"

Meh Lady is a fit companion for *Mars' Chan*. A tale of such patience under loss, and suffering, in the adversities of poverty and slow destruction,

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

can scarce be duplicated in the pages of American literature. Page has presented with pathos and an understanding sympathy this illustration of what occurred in scores of Southern homes. One who can read and not be profoundly moved, has atrophied his emotions with a masterful completeness.

Uncle Billy tells the story. Now Uncle Billy, like other privileged members of his race, has grown to be something of a philosopher. He remarks of *Meh Lady* and her probable decision about marriage: "Her cap'n ain' come yet! when dee cap'n come dee know it, an' ef dee don't know it when he come, dee know it p'intedly when he go 'way."

The dramatic ending bore out Uncle Billy's prediction. The climax is skillfully executed by Mr. Page. *Meh Lady*, without kin or friend, at last realizes her love for the Federal Captain; they are married in the old, dismantled home. At the critical moment when the minister inquired, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" no one was there to respond but Uncle Billy.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

Suddenly realizing his duty and not wishing to undertake such responsibility himself, he solemnly stepped to the front, announcing in his most portly fashion, “ ‘ Gord.’ ”

Unc' Edingburgh's Drowndin' has several excellent reflections of the old plantation life; as the author remarks, it is plantation echo. No one could deny the statement of *Unc' Edinburgh's* that “ Dees Monsus 'ceivin' critters, women is, jes as onreliable as de hind leg of a mule; a man got to watch 'em all de time.” There are hosts of similar amusing reflections throughout the story. They reflect the easy relation and the liberty that was permitted to the faithful servitor.

Ole' Stracted is another story of the kindness of the very poor to the very poor. A repetition of both acts of a Good Samaritan and the bread cast upon the waters, which these folks found returned after many days to their benefit; the only change is to the scene of a desolate and deserted plantation amid the wilds of a neglected Southern State. The plot has something more in it than is usual with Mr. Page's short stories.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

The two remaining narratives in this volume are somewhat different from the general trend of the others. *Polly* is a wholesome study in Southern femininity; *No Maid Pawn* is merely a well told reminiscence of a boyhood terror — both stories being composed in the main of recollections.

Of all the productions of Thomas Nelson Page none can supersede *In Old Virginia* for a truly historic presentation of the life in the State at that period. In fact the author himself fully appreciated his position in the import of these several stories when he stated in the introduction to the book: "If his (Page's) work has any value, it is owing to his having fortune enough to preserve in some sort a picture of a civilization, which, once having sweetened the life of the South, has since then well-nigh perished from the earth."

There is no trio of stories breathing the atmosphere of the war time privations and adventures which exhibit a phase of the writer's ability more lucidly than elsewhere in his productions. It is of the "Two Little Confederates," "Burial of

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

the Guns," and "Among the Camps" that I speak. Throughout the group, the power of combining everyday, inconsequent incidents into intensely interesting, unexpected situations betrays the underlying genius of expression and arrangement — of correlation.

Mr. Page has ventured with success into the field of the novel. "Red Rock" was awaited with considerable anxiety, as it marked the transition of a short story writer of undoubted ability into the uncertain realm of an extensive work of fiction. The anxiety was happily causeless. The work bears the stamp of firm merit, however much the charm of past literary characteristics of the author seem to have been abated.

Cardinal Newman ventured to define a gentleman as "One who never inflicts pain." Thomas Page has taken some such ideal as the inspiring theme for his character of Dr. Cary in *Red Rock*, and molded therein a man that Cardinal Newman knew of, but consciously failed to define expressly, despite his array of rhetorical accomplishments. Seldom do we encounter the equal of this old

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

physician in the pages of any literature: this type, if you will, of the country doctor of the South, or any region for that matter, where the kindliness of spirit and the charity of true doctorhood is manifested in countless heroic sacrifices. No trouble is too petty for the advice or counsel of this sympathetic cult, no disaster is too awful for their ready comprehension. In delineating such a character as Dr. Cary of Birdwood, Page has erected a monument over the graves of the countless members of the medical profession who have made existence in remote rural districts a possibility, rescued comrades on battlefields from the agonies of torture and solaced the lives of their fellows with the mercies of relief by their tireless ministrations. They deserve a fitting mark of respect. In the portrayal of this Southern Doctor they have indeed received a striking one.

Mr. Page must have a deep affection for the noble workers in this profession. The most genial, companionable, and thoughtful of all his masculine characters have been those who devoted their services to the general welfare of society.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

There are few redeeming features in *Gordon Keith*; but of these few the reply of Dr. Balsam to the rich woman of the city, who patronizingly questioned him as to why he did not take such skill as he possessed to the city, is one. "These few sheep in the wilderness need shepherding when they get sick," replied the old doctor with courteous dignity, in answer to this sophisticated inquiry.

Some members of one other profession he treats with fine scorn. In a single case, however, he sketches his character with sincere appreciation, but this single case, or type rather, is strongly offset by two examples. Dr. Bartholomew Capon of *John Marvel Assistant* and the Rev. Mr. Rimmon of *Gordon Keith* obtained their merited deserts and their share of his virulent sarcasm on the modern church and pastors who shepherd such golden flocks. Passage after passage occurs in ringing denunciation by sarcasm or direct repudiation of these followers of a Christian church, which, to his mind, wields but a mockery of its legitimate power. These men deserve his scorn

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

as society churchmen; they merit thoroughly the thunders of his wrath that are meted to them. In opposition to these repulsive figures of the church, is set that man of pure ideals and Christian spirit, John Marvel.

While the novels are of little interest as Southern productions, they have, nevertheless, a bearing upon the development of this particular writer. In *Gordon Keith*, the plot descends into melodrama, the majority of the characters being mere inanimate pawns at the errant will of the author. Exception to this sweeping statement must be taken. The personality of General Keith should not be neglected because of the several fine qualities this old quixotic Southerner embodies; a trifle too bizarre, too exotic; but of all the characters he must be conceded to be preëminently the best in the book. It is he who continued to be the mentor and guide of the hero, his son, when he was wont to stray from that ideal of manhood dear to the old man's heart, the "gentleman." It was the father who directed his son to discharge his debt of gratitude; and the best utterance of young

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

Keith in the volume is his acknowledgment of "a better man and a finer gentleman than I can ever hope to be — my father."

The book would be sufficient for anyone who had not written a *Mars' Chan* or *Meh Lady*, but is assuredly below that high plane of accomplishment. It is of some interest, however, in connection with *John Marvel Assistant*. The characters in both are much alike. The modes of expression are refined to a pleasing degree in this later attempt; the facility, the grasp and finesse of handling, outdo at every angle the rather mediocre, melodramatic production of his earlier years. Page has discarded his search for those tawdry scenes with their racy naughtiness that he indulged in with an apparently school-boy zest. To take its place the scenes of the problem novel appear. There is more skill and greater assurance in the handling of this later attempt; the recital of the tale goes along with a glib ease, a confident flow of language, that was at times painfully lacking in the previous ventures.

Midway between these two, but on a far su-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

perior plane artistically, is *Red Rock*. In the first instance, it derives its interest from being intrinsically Southern in character and atmosphere. In addition to its historical import, the book enjoys a group of men and women whose natures have been moulded in a finer region than that of the tawdry characters of the preceding volume. It contains that noble figure of Dr. Cary. The diminutive fighter, General Legaie, and his Miss Thomasia, whom he had courted for forty years, lend a charm that cannot be resisted. It is not merely the annals of two interesting families, the Grays and Carys; it is a narrative of Southern life by means of concrete instances in which a deal of history, much pathos and sorrow, a touch of sarcasm and a bit of wit, make up a valuable homily on the Southern manners of that period.

The heroism of the times shown by the women of the "Old County" makes it an attractive portrayal of Southern womanhood. There is plenty of tragedy, but what homes in the South were not replete with similar pitiful scenes during those trying twenty years or more. The pathos of lives

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

prematurely spent, and the suffering caused by legal enactments born of a misbegotten statesmanship disclose a phase of history that a part of the nation is wont to forget. Subsequently, "On Newfound River" came from the press. The frank avowal of the writer is certainly justified when he stated that the effort was merely a story with no pretension to the dignity of a novel. It is a picture of life pure and simple, dealing with the every-day incidents of a rural existence which has long since faded into the past.

In "The Old South" and "The Negro: The Southerner's Problem," the field of historical and social essays has been entered with a gift of prophetic discernment. The former deals more largely with the past; the latter deals without gloves with the present and the vital future. Mr. Page deserves well for the sanity and clarity with which he states the cold, merciless facts in his impartial and scholarly manner.

As a result of thorough legal equipment, he possesses a faculty trained to logical treatment of political and economic conditions. His is the gift

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

of an analytical mind, conversant with every phase of its subject, as a consequence of which he faithfully portrays the conditions of Southern life, unravels its problems and observes its pitfalls, all with an astuteness that would do credit to many modern statesmen. He does not hesitate to pronounce a clean cut criticism of any position, if that position seems to him to contain menace to Virginia or the South. Untouched by any violent political fantasies or the desire for some political preferment, he can dictate his utterances with a novel impartiality. These political essays are for this particular reason valuable documents on many sound doctrines existent formerly and to-day, which but for his clear-minded elucidation would continue to be regarded as political vagaries only.

The constructive principles of a short story impose many restrictions on a vigorous and comprehensive presentation of any theme. The sum total of a man's art must consist in his capacity to cope with and conquer these several disabilities imposed upon him by the rules of an artistic composition. The efforts of Thomas Nelson Page have met with

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

gratifying success in the accomplishment of this feat. In fact, he has executed nothing quite so well in any field as his short stories.

To procure an atmosphere intimately related to the context of the narrative at the very outset of the tale, was a mark of workmanship that Poe considered most fundamental in the constitution of a short story. *No Haid Pawn* is an instance of Page's faculty for performing this requisite of the story teller's art. With an atmosphere akin to that of *The Fall of The House of Usher*, he leads the reader insensibly into the heart of the tale until the complete setting is minutely exposed. That a host of *Djinns* escaped from Hugo's dominions should wing their way by would occasion no surprise to one impressed in the supernal terrors of this Virginia swamp. The effect is thorough; the atmosphere is made much of in every direction.

The space to develop characters is of necessity materially restricted. As a consequence, the finesse of the narrator's art must be exhibited in presenting the several figures of his imagination in a forceful manner by innuendo and suggestion

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

in judicial apportionment. This task Page has accomplished in an able manner. The characters of *Meh Lady, Unc' Edingburgh'*, of *Polly*, and their companions, are finely molded specimens of that life the author intended to depict. The number of personages are very limited, but those select members are men and women of unquestioned strength, tempered by an exquisite delicacy of feeling. The value of these characters, in the category of a member of the *social historians*, is the fidelity to the actual people of that period so delineated. If they are but the entertaining phantoms of the author's fancy, they are artistic, but absurdly valueless to one interested in the historic and social phase of a country's life which the minute monographs and official records fail to disclose. If they are men and women with an insubstantial basis in fact for their origin, then likewise the lack of actuality invalidates the primary usefulness of these characters. What they possess of pathos, humor, and companionability will make them entertaining visitors on any book shelf, but scarce permanent members, unless evolved with

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

some very remarkable species of literary art. Page has seen fit to portray his acquaintances in the garb of short story fiction in such a mode as to leave the essential historic features and settings in their legitimate place, to preserve his distinctive Virginianism, and yet to lose none of his literary finish. There has been no ruthless sacrifice of artistic beauty in his stories, no rash disregard of pleasing finish because of this devotion to the truth. Both the distinction of creating a literary production of considerable intrinsic weight and erecting a monument of a social régime have become Page's through the merit of his adherence to a particular, faithful sketch of this scheme of Virginia life.

From an identical attitude his novels should be judged. Both *Gordon Keith* and *John Marvel Assistant* are but absorbing and transient works of modern life. They have little that is either permanently or fundamentally valuable. In what marked contrast to these volumes are those masterpieces of character and setting, *Red Rock*, and in some measure, *On New Found River*, notwithstanding the superior technical finish, the dramatic

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

power of either one or the other, beyond the ease and freedom of expression which one novel may possess and the other may not, *Red Rock* is entitled to a degree of respect and sincere appreciation of worth that the other two volumes can lay claim to in no manner whatsoever. This book is primarily a human document. It is a document interwoven with the histories of Southern life and character, depicting with masterly insight the vicissitudes of a particular period in a manner found nowhere else. Such a kindly and genial interpretation of this stormy and misunderstood time is one that should be welcomed with open arms by all who profess to hold the ideal of truth and perfect understanding. This is a volume that should find a treasured home with the scholar and the investigator. As to the artistic merit, it is more masterly in interest, it is more generous in unfolding the method and character of Page himself than any other single production from the pen of this gifted man. It is in fact, by so doing, a revelation of Virginia character, Page being intensely Virginian.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

The laurels of a poet will not be, perhaps, laid in any abundant measure at the door of Thomas Nelson Page. His poetic productions are tuneful melodies intrinsically valuable for that spirit and language of the time and race they are intended to represent. The moods and sentiments of the black race find ample expression in these half-epic relations of events in a heroic and chivalric period. The tunes, the songs, and the snatches of plantation melody rank favorably with the versions of negro songs collected by Joel Chandler Harris.

The matter of character has been a point of excellence in all of Mr. Page's efforts. Following the long line of literary precedents, from the days of Helen of Troy and Iphigenia of Tauris to the present, despite the cynical treatment of womankind by Balzac and Dumas, or the cold materialism of Turgeneff, Page has seen fit to treat the women of his fancy and experience with profound attention and a gentle delicacy. Facts garnered from recollections and reminiscences were sufficient for him to reproduce other Cordelias and Desdemonas of universal attractive-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ness. Universal attractiveness because of those womanly traits of lovableness and sympathy, of joyful caprice and engaging perverseness, that make an appeal which recognizes no denial and admits no refusal of admittance even to the hearts of cynical critics.

In *Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War* the existence of Southern women and the scheme of their raising is admirably related. A product of such a system of existence as prevailed in those olden days, could not have been anything other than a creature of such inevitable and pronounced charm as were these, the Southern women, of whom he so truly and beautifully writes in this delightful volume. *Meh Lady* and *Blair Cary* were the products of such a system. As to its success, need more be said? The domestic life that the women of the ante-bellum period made possible throws into sorry contrast those multitudes of matrimonial establishments of the present, with their tarnished and tawdry settings, their mutilated domesticity and public unhappiness. The sympathy and charity of these women was boundless.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

“ What poor person was there, however inaccessible was the cabin, that was sick or destitute and knew not her charity? who that was bereaved that had not her sympathy? “No labor was too severe for their undertaking, if another person was in need of aid; fragile and beautiful as were the women characters of Poe, molded after his own Virginia Clem, they possessed that indomitable spirit which made sacrifice and difficulty, met in the discharge of what they conceived to be duty, a thing of small concern to them. It was not necessary for them to learn the arts of being ladies; that art was their inheritance; they had no period for coming into society, for they were always an intimate part of society itself. Page disclaims that he was “ responsible for their creation, but only for their portraiture.” All this and more, Page has done for literary annals; a service to the South preserved in the short story, in the novel and in the essay.

Dialect has been the chief medium of expression with Cable, Craddock, Harris and Page. Cable used the semi-French patois of the Louisi-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ana Creole, Craddock dealt in the uncouth speech of the Tennessee mountaineer, but both Harris and Page have employed the dialect of the plantation negro. No more distinctive form of speech could be found. Equally so, there scarce could be obtained a dialect so difficult of perfect handling and accurate translation into print. That both have succeeded admirably is, indeed, a tribute to their scholarship and linguistic attainments. It is a complicated study in phonetics. Thomas Nelson Page has used this medium with consummate effect. The language used in *Old Virginia* is perfection, as far as perfection can be obtained, in dialect literature. At once accurate and trustworthy, the speech has lost little of its original charm by definite location in type. The music of its intonations, its swing and melody, are in the main retained with a master's aptitude. The portrayal of Virginia life by this agency is done both widely and well.

Page will be noted among classic writers for his efforts in portraying Virginia life, and in delineating darky character of the slave period. At one

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

time he unfolds life in the fullness of prosperity, then in the vicissitudes of harrowing war, and again the desolation of fireside and the unutterable humiliation of poverty under the merciless domination of a radical, political fanaticism.

As a modern critic remarks of great books that they are "not born in the intellect, but in experience," so Mr. Page can with certainty base much of his work upon the latter part of this definition. His Virginianism is an essentially personal thing. No figure in this group of *social historians* has placed more of his concrete experiences and recollections in his productions than has Thomas Nelson Page. The atmosphere and spirit of all his writings is one of pleasant reminiscence and delightful historic recount.

His attitude of genial good nature as well towards the failings of his people as to the unwarranted criticisms of them has gained for him a host of admirers who at first were attracted by his judicial and scholarly approach to mooted questions and, finally, grew to appreciate his worth, realizing the breadth of his perspective. By this

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

method, his has been the privilege of conduced an amicable understanding between factions that have been violently estranged. If he had accomplished only what he has done in this field alone, and no more, he would have performed an inestimable service to the South. As it is, he has both executed this present duty and, also, laid the foundation for a debt to himself from all who in future days may have cause to seek the truth in respect of that state of society.

As essayist, historian, scholar, romancer, he is versatile; as a man of insight into the several affairs of his native state, he is stamped as a man of keen judgment; as a delineator of Virginia darky character in slavery, a painter of Virginia life, and a genius in his own field, he is ordained to stand with the masters of authorship, as Cable is occupied with Mississippi life, Craddock with that of the remote mountain regions of Tennessee, Harris with that of Georgia in the realm of negro folk lore, Allen with Kentucky life, and Page with the story of the landed gentry of "Ole Virginia."

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

*“Fancies and passions miscreate
By man in things dispassionate.”*

—Swinburne.

WHEN Sainte-Beuve announced his method of interpretative criticism embodying an investigation of the author's life and productive influences as well as the book itself, he gave the first decided impetus to a really rational criticism. Not only was this challenge to the accepted methods a flaunted insult to classicism, and to the rigid conformist to ancient models, but, also, it was a world extensive declaration for sane critical judgment, for an equitable interpretation of the literary artist. The theory demanded fair dealing between the judge and the judged. George W. Cable is a case in point. Exclusive attention to his concrete works would be as unjust for a comprehensive estimate of his position in

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Southern Literature, as would the mere study of his surroundings and personality. Both are integral parts of the same unit. (i).

The several generations of his ancestors with their respective opinions, handed down to Mr. Cable a curious anomaly of ideas destined to have a radical influence upon his career. The blood of the Dutch, English-Puritan, and German stocks are all mingled in his veins. His grandfather was a German, George Cable, born in Virginia of the old family of Cables; he later removed to Pennsylvania where, together with his wife, Margaret Stott Cable, who was of Dutch descent, they agreed to free their negroes, both having decided prejudice against holding slaves. Subsequently, the family moved to Indiana, where the father of the novelist married a woman of extraordinary character, Rebecca Boardman; she was of English-Puritan ancestry from the New England States.

As a result of the financial crisis of 1837, the father of the novelist failed in business three years after his marriage; but he was persuaded by his wife to resume his efforts for a livelihood in New

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

Orleans — the thriving port just coming into prominence. Here, as a salesman of Western produce to river steamers, he was decidedly successful. Six children were born, two of whom died in childhood. George Washington Cable was born October twelfth, 1844, thus attaining the age of fourteen before the death of his father, which left the family in cramped circumstances. It, therefore, became necessary for the future author to start to work in the commission firm of Violet & Black. This was the beginning of his commercial career.

In 1863 young Cable enlisted in the Fourth Mississippi Cavalry of the Confederate Army, in General Wirt Adam's Brigade. So very youthful was the boy's appearance at the age of nineteen that frequently he provoked the enlivening question from the Federal soldiers, "Are you sending babies to fight us?" The youngster made an excellent soldier, serving with daring, courage, and promptness, proving himself a strict disciplinarian; he spent his spare hours around the camp fire in the study of the Bible, Latin, and Mathematics.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

He was finally dangerously wounded in the armpit and forced to retire from the service.

Upon the scattering of the forces after the surrender, young Cable procured a position as errand boy, while he studied civil engineering. When he finally became sufficiently competent, he joined a surveying party that was to go along the Acha-falaya River in the Teche country. Here he contracted the "breakbone fever" or malaria, which prevented him from doing active work for two years, but he was not entirely idle during this time, as he applied himself to the natural history and the human history of that section since the time of the first settlers.

He soon commenced to contribute humorous and critical selections intermingled with some verse to the New Orleans *Picayune* under the pen name of "Drop Shot." As he was rather successful with these sketches, he was permanently attached to the staff. For the first time his radical views came into prominence. He resigned from the *Picayune* because of an assignment to write up the dramatic criticism of a Sunday theater. At

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

that time he objected to Sabbath breaking of any sort, even having no food cooked on that day in his house. Elsewhere his religious life and scruples were carried to other extremes.

Upon his resignation from the *Picayune* he became the bookkeeper of a cotton dealer. He, nevertheless, continued writing, contributing to the *Century Magazine*. After a short period, on the death of his employer, he gave up his position and devoted himself to literature exclusively.

The first story, "Sieur George," was a little masterpiece in its way. A number of equally fine-grained sketches followed in close order. After the recovery from his illness, "The Grandissimes" appeared in serial form, thus beginning his long line of stories, novels and essays dealing with his view of the varied phases of Southern life. He has continued to contribute in this same vein with considerable honor and fame, yet those whom he delineates and those he attempts to bring forward from the shadows of a departed régime have protested in an unmistakable manner against

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the method of rejuvenation and questioned the accuracy of his interpretation.

As Sainte-Beuve declared that it was within the province of a critique to investigate and weigh the influences of an author's life and times, so it is within the province of this sketch to find wherein George W. Cable, the artist, failed as George W. Cable, the social philosopher. It resolves itself into the study of his life in its influence upon the product of his pen—the genius of his creative powers.

At the age of an impressionable youngster equipped with a receptive mind, he entered the camps of the Confederate Army and took an active share in the violent vicissitudes of the shifting conflict. Thus it is that the scenes of his early boyhood are vividly reflected in "The Cavalier." The young hero who reveals his fears and triumphs with whole-souled frankness is none other than the author himself speaking. The religious convictions of the young man and his almost ridiculous qualms of conscience are those of a real personage; there is the pervasive feeling that the

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

author is playing the rôle of autobiographer, yet desires to disguise the fact by some impalpable film of fiction. As a source of knowledge of the author's personality, it is valuable, nevertheless the continuation of the theme as the main topic of an extended novel is not only tedious and trivial, but degenerates into meaningless frothings. Great sermons have been preached by the masterly revelations of soul in the unique creations of literature; here there can be no supreme art where the actor in the scenes is the evident mouthpiece of the writer's moralizing. Mr. Cable's essential fault is his obtrusion of himself into the limelight of the action. It is a personal sermon.

The minor characters of this volume have pleasing details; that is the most that can be said for them. The heroine, Charlotte Olivier, is a rather whimsical creation endowed by the genius of some superhuman intelligence, which buffets the fates and plays the spy with remarkable skill. We can but fancy she is not the product of imagination purely, rather the crystallization of an ideal with all the perfections of such a state and the limits

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

of its practical application. Even the counter play of the hero takes on something of this mock-heroic tinge-puppets for the proof of a religious fantasy.

He is supreme in the description of Louisiana as the natural paradise. Excellent artistic feeling united with scientific observation as the result of the long days spent in camp and in roaming as a surveyor through the swamps and bayous of the Atchafalaya River was a fitting prerequisite for the endowment of the adroit artist that George W. Cable is. With matchless grace he touches the lute strings of Nature's lyre and revels in a harmony of color and sound.

The charming idyl of "Bonaventure" abounds with the mystic beauties of the swamp. The intricate fashioning of the silvery curtains of Spanish moss, gently swayed by the soft eddying tide of a hidden bayou becomes as vivid to the imagination as the sweeping emerald prairies under the dome of liquid topaz, sapphire, and opal rimmed at the horizon, where the sun has lately sunk, by a medley of lemon and orange shafts of light in the fading tints of rose and salmon. The superb

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

grace of his descriptions mated with the vast scientific knowledge create a remarkably life-like result.

Mr. Cable is successful in this domain. No one who was not thoroughly conversant with every mood and whim of this beautiful wilderness on gulf and river could portray quite so effectively the varied aspects of the semi-tropical fauna and the several phenomena of nature. On the one hand to respond to the caress of utter peace in the quiet beauty of a secluded wilderness; on the other, to rise in unison with the unbridled fury of a hurricane, is undoubtedly masterful. From the wastes of an unexplored forest to the rare gardens in the French quarter of New Orleans, there is the ever present sense of Mr. Cable's mastery of his setting. Through the magic of his art gorgeous pictures of retired courts and high walled gardens light the imagination with every tint and shade of the brilliant original. His is the extraordinary faculty of appreciating fully the subtle charms of this exotic color and of holding up selected bits of the bizarre old scenes for the enjoyment of those of to-day and the instruction of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

those of to-morrow. "Bonaventure" and the "Solitary," in "Strong Hearts," together with "The Grandissimes," are instances of his scenes of bayou, river, and forest life; "Dr. Sevier," "Posson Jone" and "Old Creole Days" are devoted rather more exclusively to the fast departing beauties of the French quarter in New Orleans. For perpetuating such scenes we owe him a debt of gratitude.

The habits of George W. Cable in life and in work are indicative of a methodical mind. As the probable result of his commercial experiences, his books and notes are kept in scrupulous order. So it is a salient characteristic of his to be scientifically accurate; he is primarily the lover of abstract truth, of keen precision, of logical action. That is his difficulty with character delineation. He wants the men and women he imagines to be the logical result of their mode of life, their customs, their morals, forgetting in his desire for logical precision the illogical sequence of actual events. If Mr. Cable could forget the message he is trying to teach, his personal views on the

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

proper standard of morality and social government, and let the characters of his books be men and women as real as his scenes, we could hail him as a master poet whose artistic sense was alive to color and character alike. His search for an accurate justification of his theory prevents the actual truth. Without truth the artist's best efforts are spent in a misconceived struggle to give birth to an immortal production.

As Gibbon speaks of the models of the Ancients "wherein truth appears embellished with all the graces of the imagination," it might be said of masterly fiction that an essential prerequisite is that the imagination be embellished with all the graces of truth.

George W. Cable is similar in some measure to those Russian authors of the stamp of Tolstoi, Gorky and Turgenieff, who attend with assiduous skill to the details of their setting, but weld a perverted scheme of human action and a distorted view of human life into the whole. Like these Russians, Mr. Cable views his characters, his scheme of thought, through the haze of personal

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

prejudice and opinion; his motive, like theirs, is to show the repulsive results of a social error at all costs and mend the vehicle of his expression as best he may. That is neither good art nor truth.

Whenever the literary artist steps into the realm of the social philosopher, he has entered upon a tortuous course where a legion of literary reputations have been wrecked. He can tell of life as he sees it, but to tell of life as he would have it, robs the tale of its vital essence. He can be a stenographer, but not the stenographer and him who dictates at the same time.

Throughout Mr. Cable objects strenuously to the evils of quadroon and slave; to miscegenation; to those illicit relations between the white race and the race tintured with a greater or less amount of a darker pigment. He is a radical politically. Religion is a thing of paramount importance. He finds the lax morals and liberal code of a particular section of Creoles an abomination and crying shame which he immediately saddles upon the whole community.

Rancor and bitterness are the monopolizing fea-

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

tures of his thought, which permeate his methods and prevent the rightful sway of his artistic sense. Satire and ridicule of shame are the keen weapons of his expression, but fall short of their object and strip the writer of his power. As one obsessed he writes with a burning finger what he seems to think is the hidden script. It is no secret. The objections to such a system are recognized; the disastrous results of such an incident to a social order are heartily condemned by rational opinion. There is no need for the flaunting of this error; his own literary activity has been materially debased and estranged from the truth as he was carried by his momentous eagerness to expose the sin. The thoughts and actions of posterity will not be the gainer a whit by this passion to satirize the moral nakedness of a fatal mistake perpetrated by a thoughtless minority; Creole life in general has been made to stand as the synonym for the unpardonable sins of race because of a defect in a small division of the community and the ineffectiveness of the law there. His perspective has been violently displaced.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

The winning characteristics of the Creole and the charming mode of his life are in the main true. The truth, however, to proportion is, in some places slightly, in others widely, divergent from the contour of the original, for the picture he draws presents the queer anomaly of a master delineator, with a passion for accuracy, betrayed by the temptation to insert his own interpretation, not to present faithfully the features of the subject. It is this defect that robs the sketches of their claims to absolute historical trustworthiness. Observable exaggeration insidiously poisons the mind of the reader with suspicions as to the fidelity of the artist's efforts in exhibiting faithfully the picture at once so attractive and full of tropical color.

In the "Silent South" Mr. Cable effectively demonstrates his inability to argue his points consistently. At one place he goes at great length to demand certain privileges for the blacks which would result in certain social equality, and in a paper immediately following this particular one, denies that such was the purpose of the demand,

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

although such proposal proved to have only one meaning. The inconsistency remains throughout. On political and social questions his religious and moral inclinations carry him into uncertain, unfamiliar waters. The firm character and sincerity of his utterances command, however, sympathetic respect. He has manifested throughout his whole life this willingness to stand by his opinions and back them by every resource at his command, and this character was early seen by his religious studies in the camps and in his resignation from the *Pica-yune*.

The resentment of his neighbors made these fearless declarations of his views the subject of estrangement. Life in New Orleans became unbearable to one who had so flagrantly offended his friends among the Creoles and even in the American quarter. Consequently, he moved his home to Northampton, Massachusetts, where he now resides.

The author evidently had this charming spot in mind when he constructed the delightful tale, "Bylow Hill." The striking sweetness of the

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

sketch, dominated as it is by the attempt to unravel a moral tangle, reveals the true worth and ability of the man when he does not attempt to inject at every angle some favorite reform or subject of sarcastic ridicule. For it is his aptitude with sarcastic weapons and telling epigram that has made his stories of Creole life and his comments thereon teem with stinging remarks. The English-Puritan blood constantly cries out against the moral laxity of a section of the community — the morals of this gay, free, pleasure loving people of a light hearted race; his association with Gallic life has put an edge upon his verbal weapons which he knows how to handle with uncommon power. Yet sarcasm and epigram do not beget sympathetic interpretation or truth. We see in "Dr. Sevier" a man strikingly like the writer. He will not let politics alone; he will be sarcastic and quixotic, and these, true to life as they may be, are potent factors in rendering him unable to do his full share of good. He lets his dangerous notions of reform destroy his efficiency to make reform a more tangible thing; his influence deli-

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

quesces through some mysterious alchemy wherein the destructive powers of conflicting elements have full sway.

As has been mentioned, a number of the men in Mr. Cable's books express some phase of his life, some element of his thought, or a particular incident in his career. In this same volume of "Dr. Sevier" the character of John Richling, weak and vacillating, whom he manages to kill so entertainingly after a tedious existence, is none other than a reflection of George W. Cable's youthful experience in the commercial world. The description of the scenes in the business district has every attribute of actual observation. The duties of accountant and clerk, the search for work and the bitter struggle for bread, are the impressions of personal experience.

The scenes in "Bonaventure" are only those his study of natural history and the days spent as a surveyor in the swamps and plantation fields could make possible; the very character of "Bonaventure" seems to be an expression of his ideal man filled with noble simplicity acting in his pas-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

sion for knowledge the pioneer of civilization among the Acadians. It is, perhaps, his supreme creation. The texture of the simple Bonaventure is exceedingly fine — a man of peace and thorough lovableness upon whose slight shoulders devolve moral problems of no mean order. Through the frank nobility of his soul he met and conquered each one manfully.

The scene is almost a sequel to "Evangeline." The Acadians have settled in their new home and this is a study of their fate and how they met it.

Aurora and Honore, together with Raoul and Narcisse, are happy creations. The latter especially is a valuable picture, or may we say a reproduction, of the essentials of Creole character that make so attractive this Gallic offspring in the new land. None of the charming vivacity and keen wit of the original seems to have been lost in transplanting the race from the shores of France. The gay, inconsequent beauties and the irresponsible, pleasure seeking men appear rare plants in the cold system of democratic government.

In "Old Creole Days" and in "Strong

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

Hearts" there is much of fine artistic worth. No more beautiful sketches of New Orleans life in the early part of the last century have come from the pen of this gifted writer. The moral protests and problems still abound, but the essence of the story is surpassingly fine. The scenes become so vivid that the reader seems to have unconsciously drifted into the actual portrait where the atmosphere is suffused with the scents of orange blossom and oleander. We walk down the vistas of semi-tropical luxuriosness with a people of departed days. "Posson Jone" and "Pere Rahael" are portrayals of the early type of pioneer and citizen in New Orleans; the description of life in the provincial community are adroitly done by skillful word-painting and genuine artistic handling.

Throughout it all the prevailing genius of his Creole stories is that Gallic spirit which has endowed the French language with its distinctive charm—"esprit." That indefinable soul of brilliant expression which is the subtle embodiment of a vivacious people's thought; the power to infer,

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the ability to grasp the extreme niceties of an allusion and to use the hint for its utmost value. Mr. Cable's long association with these peoples has imbued his writings with the most attractive flavor of their own productions.

After all, we might well ask, what indeed is the claim that George Washington Cable will have to live as an integral part of Southern Literature? With all his various errors, he will certainly take his place among those of that Southern School of authors represented by Page, Craddock, Harris, and Allen; however much he has missed the true spirit of the Southland, there is much in him of valuable character. Every man in this school has had a mission of reconstruction; it has been the function of each to infuse with the fire of his genius some particular phase of Southern life and manners that it might be perpetuated as a 'vivid bit of reality. In this aspect they are important as interpreters, recorders, historians. Their mission is indeed that of the reconstructionists, of rebuilders, of those who reproduce what they have known intimately or lived personally, so that pos-

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE

terity may be accurately informed as to the course of events in a past era, as to the illusive manners of a departed régime. Their work is a stage wherein their words serve both as a prompt-book and the actual lines for the actors in a neglected realm.

Thus Mr. Cable, like Page, Craddock, and Harris, has used dialect most effectively. He has uncovered and used without stint his copious supply of scientific material for the descriptions of his scenes; he has reproduced characters who speak as those for whom they stand must have spoken, evolved from actual observation and patient historical research. We can largely overlook his failure to give the life and spirit of the Creole with strict fidelity, for he has given us much that is innately beautiful and really superior. The reward is a generous share of honor.

As a man of sincere religious power, which worked in many cases a detriment to his art and in others an inspiration, as an author of versatility, as an observer of uncommon analytical ability, we are entitled to judge him worthy of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

thoughtful consideration. This is his claim to keep his fame perpetually bright. He has held up the mirror in order to reflect a little known life, presented the reflection skillfully, that the world might hereafter read and know. For this his works should continue a vital element in Southern Literature.

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK
(Mary Noailes Murfree)

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

(Mary Noailes Murfree)

*“To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”*

—Wordsworth.

IN the vast domain of the Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains a remarkable clan of men has settled. The territory included within the mountainous sections of Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Georgia, extending from the region of the Ragged Mountains, immortalized by Poe, to the low lying foothills of Georgia, familiar in the pages of Joel Chandler Harris, is one of vivid and impressive grandeur. Seldom have the rugged lands of the New World been so aptly adapted to the maintenance of the original hardihood in the early pioneers.

The venturesome spirits of the first colonists

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

at Jamestown scattered rapidly as the reinforcements from England arrived, steadily pushing their hardy front towards the promising West. Legions of these men became enamoured of the hills, and attached themselves permanently to the serried slopes of this primeval tract. Not alone, however, were the mountainous districts of the eastern colonies populated with the able and sturdy spirits of the daring settlers who came for a peaceful home, but numbers of the discontents, malefactors, and outcasts of some political or social revolution in Europe were shipped to the virgin fastnesses of the new dependencies to work out their schemes in the trackless wilderness. Hosts of these restless characters found no more content here than at home. The increasing civilization in the growing colonial centers necessitated their continual withdrawal to the secluded, rougher localities where their bold and adventurous natures found ample occupation in the struggle for a meager existence. The exodus of these types from the realm of continental civilization into the deserted regions of the Southern Mountains

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

marked the genesis of one of the most bizarre divisions of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Nowhere have more notable expositions been presented of the character and scenes in any particular locality, than those in the volumes of Charles Egbert Craddock dealing with the Tennessee Mountain folk. The inhabitants of the Great Smoky Mountains entered their forest homes with ideas and equipment modern a century ago. To-day, they maintain virtually the same aspect and the identical implements of their forefathers barely modified by the marvels of outside invention. It is scant wonder that the delineation of such characters in the accurate and precise manner of Craddock proved of intense literary interest.

Miss Murfree attacked her intricate problem with a scientific spirit. The mountaineer's nature was an unexplored tract in the studies of social psychology. She applied a keen intelligence and an active imagination to the analysis of this reticent, uncouth and backward division of society until she faithfully unravelled the subtle mass.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

of customs, unwritten laws, childish prejudices, and superstitions. In her record of this effort she has embodied a faithful reproduction of the actual conditions with little perversion for artistic purposes. At first glance such a course would presuppose a treatise of interest to the student of social conditions utterly antagonistic to any pretence to literary success. This is not the case. To portray the individuality of this primitive community is to unfold a novel type of Anglo-Saxon, at once fundamentally the exponent of personal liberty and ready justice, together with undeveloped capacities for extraordinary progress, making the work a veritable revelation.

The study of these mountaineers of pure English ideals is an uncanny thing. We see ourselves more than a century ago, arrested in the development by some supernatural neglect, put under the microscope, and every point of our national traits and organism illuminated fully in the light of modern information. Miss Murfree spent a part of her life amongst these people, and, in so doing, she served an apprenticeship in a stupendous

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

human laboratory. Her books are laboratory records of a distinctive investigation in generic psychology which gives her the credit of a genuine contribution to the science of the social organization as well as to the creation of an artistic and literary success.

The question of the characters in Craddock must inevitably recall the frequent statements that her works are marred by their sameness of view and similarity of character development. Unconsciously this was in the main a genuine compliment to the success of the author's effort to execute a sane and rational sketch of mountain men and women. A people left to themselves for decades in the boundless wilderness outside the pale of any progress, exchanging no views except those that originate within the community, living no life but the simple routine of a barren rural existence, could hardly be expected to evolve any considerable amount of original thought or produce a race of versatile conversationalists. The superficial events of the district — its laws, its customs, and social happenings — could only agree

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

with that same monotony of that life. A more complicated scheme of society might naturally originate in a varied cosmopolitan life, yet the equity of the situation would preclude the opposite in any society distinguished for nothing, except its primitive simplicity. So, while in one light the criticism is technically defensible as to the monotony of the external phases of the mountain life — the dialect, the customs and superstitions, the duties and the manners of the community members — yet the analytic mind of the writer has brought to light the more delicate and personal shadings of the actual internal thought of those people.

A modern American critic has presented as a qualification of a literary production that it shall be of "enduring interest." No more striking illustration of this literary truism could be found than in Craddock's novels, for beneath the routine, superficial shell of the mountain life the characters of her novels are vitally real and human individuals. Every figure carries an eager and insistent claim of "enduring interest" by the simple

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

virtue of its humble humanity, and appeals to the American mind in particular because every movement and every motive of the personages is actuated by staunch ideals of personal liberty and innate justice. Here the social institutions of the nation are moulded in the rough.

Diversity of character is everywhere evident in fullest measure. Without the bounds of the conventional customs, each man and woman is developed as a distinctive, personal unit fashioned in his own particular mould and responding to the complication of his life in his own particular manner. While Miss Murfree has been hampered in the matter of routine happenings, she has widely diversified her characters in the relation of their personal traits and individual inclinations. It would be as just to criticise the handling of "Richard Feverel," dealing with life in an intricate civilization, with the usages and mannerisms of conventional English society, as it is to deprecate the continual use of the inherent features in a simple mountain existence — both must of necessity maintain the atmosphere, the reality of the

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

setting, by retaining the staple fixtures of their respective societies.

In the same manner that Dickens and Scott in the British Isles and Cooper in America treated the types in the lower and more ignorant strata of the community with such realistic skill, Craddock has presented with deserved success the same cast of intellect. These mountaineers may lack the polish and education of their more fortunate brethren, but by the genius and justice of the author's pen the ennobling features of their lives stand out in brilliant contrast in their humble love for their children in their wretched cabins on the barren declivities, their efforts to rear them in order that they may become efficient members of the household, their patient, ignorant but none the less pathetic efforts, to save them from the ravages of disease and hardship, savoring strongly of that potent, touching humanity which strikes the sympathetic emotions in every section, lending to their life a keen and vital interest. It is the same world-wide spirit in the humble prose and in the humble dialect of the uncouth countryman, as

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

that pervading the polished verses of Hugo's "Lorsque L'Enfant Paraît."

Each volume has its quota of rural types. The officers of the law, the moonshiners, and the murderers; farmers, millers and blacksmiths; store-keepers, hunters, and the itinerant preacher; all are commingled into the elemental mosaic; Miss Murfree has succeeded admirably in etching accurately with the methodical attention to detail of a De Maupassant. She presents, however, her subjects with something of a sweeter, nobler enthusiasm than that superb artist.

And there is still another point in favor of her delineation in the sphere of country character. Cooper, who dealt so intimately with similar elemental types, did not make his characters in their entirety as strikingly an intimate a part of the scenes amid which they moved. Many of his characters failed to conform as vividly and as accurately as they should to the calls that the nature of the situation made upon them. In handling characters plainly identified with the surroundings and treating them from such a perspec-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

tive, Craddock has wrought a result of potential effect.

Beneath the rude exterior of the Tennessee mountaineer there is a wealth of superior qualities. Shy and sensitive as he is, the cursory view of the chance traveler affords little ground for an adequate appreciation of the tangible virtues possessed by the inhabitants of the Great Smoky and the Chilhowee. Craddock has depicted these people with infinite finesse and subtle delicacy of workmanship. They become under the magic of her revealing studies men of genuine nobility, of lofty and inspiring character, full of loyalty and of deep devotion to every tie. Men not inspired perpetually by a bloodthirsty desire to kill and slay their fellows upon the whim of some fancied provocation, men not animated by spirits antagonistic to every canon of law and order, but inspired with sentiments and ideals creditable to a more polished society. The distance they are removed in the scale of real worth from their more fortunate compatriots is one existing in the imagination solely, for the true mountaineer as

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

portrayed in Craddock's novels is a man little withdrawn in political and religious sentiment from the "valley man." "The ennobling difference between one man and another,—between one animal and another,—is precisely in this, that one feels more than another," and, despite the crudity of his education, the Tennessean of the hills in the pages of Craddock as well as in his native slopes is a man capable of deep and pure emotions.

No more attractive study of rural personalities can be found in the treatment of American characters than those figures of the "Prophet of Great Smoky" and the "Despot of Broomsedge Cove." Moral power of a high order is at home in these men. Miss Murfree has skillfully sketched the religious ecstasy, the faithful devotion, and the moral sublimity of men by nature large and generous, yet whose every action is hindered by accident of birth, by lack of competent education.

On the rougher side of the community's life the daring and fortitude of the fugitive from justice,

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the moonshiner and the falsely accused are fitting partners of Dandie Dinmont, Rob Roy, and Claverhouse. Border farmer, freebooter, soldier in a bad cause they may have been, nevertheless the lofty, kindly natures that were the mainsprings of each have their counterparts in the identical qualities of the Tennessee Mountaineer, for "these men touch the ideal of heroism only in their courage and faith, together with a strong, but uncultivated, or rather mistakenly applied intellectual power." Self-confident, bold, hardy men they appear in Craddock's pages and justly so, for a man's personality can be but the intimate reflection of his environment.

As in the countless scenes of literature, the character of woman is treated with something of a finer appreciation, of a rare gift of gentleness that makes the creation glow with perpetual interest. The heroines of Miss Murfree's romances are no exception to this literary tradition. The elderly women have that same militant, dominant spirit of "Lady Macbeth," but without any of the evil of an "o'erleaping ambition."

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

The gentle "Adelicia" is as fine a specimen of true effort in the sphere of a Christian peacemaker as could be found — a striking counterpart to the silent, appealing manner of her sister "Julia." The inspiring heroism and sacrifice of "Cynthia Ware" is of the same fine texture as that of "Jeannie Deans"; the gentle protecting spirit of "Dordinda Cayce," ample in its purity of womanly sympathy and filial love, is likewise a production of audacious magnetism. "Marcella Strobe" has a claim, a very definite claim, to a lofty position in the literary gathering of noble women, for there is no character in Charles Egbert Craddock's works that is more resplendent of dauntless devotion and high-minded, patient sacrifice for justice and her love. As a delineation of what heroism and physical suffering a noble woman will undergo, it would be necessary to mention one of the most attractive feminine figures in these sketches — "Cely Shaw." True to actual circumstances, not all of these women that people the pages in this series of stories are of the fine and courageous type; at intervals, the "Effie Deans" play their

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

parts in the primitive drama as well as the "Alice Lees."

One of the finest expressions of feminine loyalty is found in a little speech of "Dordinda Cayce" in the "Prophet of Great Smoky Mountains." The situation is one of striking dramatic possibilities. The spontaneous expression of a beautiful, noble girl, clad in the shabby homespun of home-weaving, standing alone upon the dismal slope of the silent mountain amid the dripping trees enshrouded with the morning vapor, becomes a most powerful soliloquy. "An' I'm boun' ter try to holp him, ef I kin. I know too much, sence Rick spoke las' night, ter let me set an' fold my hands in peace. 'Pears like ter me ez that thar all the diff'ence 'twixt humans an' beastis, ter holp one another some. An' if a human won't, 'pears like ter me ez the Lord hev wasted a soul on that critter."

It is equally true to speak of Miss Murfree as Brownell speaks of Cooper, "some, at all events, of those gentle and placid beings that he was so fond of creating are very real." Nevertheless,

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

the placidity and the amiable bending to the moods of fate so evident in the women of Cooper is markedly lacking in the heroines of Craddock's tales, who are more nearly the primitive, bold, and virile offspring of a civilization in its first youth, accustomed to contend with the rigours of an unsettled existence. The sacrifices of their placidity and amiability does not imply, however, any corresponding sacrifice of reality which is, to the contrary, enlivened and revitalized to a still greater extent.

The life of Miss Mary Noailes Murfree has been one particularly fitted by nature and chance circumstance to obtain the accurate material evinced in her character work. She was born in Tennessee on an old plantation called "Grant-lands" on January twenty-fourth, 1850, where she lived for six years. Thence she went to Nashville, remaining in that city for seventeen years, finally moving to St. Louis. A return was made within a short period to her native state.

While a child she was afflicted by a fever which resulted in partial paralysis, inducing permanent

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

lameness. Thus somewhat barred from an active participation in the customary pastimes of a most robust childhood, she naturally gravitated for her amusement to the companionship of books. This was but the beginning of a long and remarkably excellent training of a mind already most favorably endowed for the particular sphere of work which she was destined to pursue. Her education was obtained both in the South and in the North, followed by an extensive study at home. While in Tennessee it was the custom of the family to spend the summer at a mountain community named "Bersheba"; during the war residence at this spot was rendered compulsory because the contending armies made inhabitation of the old homestead an impossibility. Thus, here it was that her keen powers of observation and active analysis were given full play in gathering ideas and devising plans for future success in delineating mountain life.

The plots of these tales are all simple. There is nothing especially intricate or involved, for it is merely a section of real life removed from its

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

physical surroundings to the printed page, done in a manner, however, to command intense interest in the trivialities of a rather uneventful existence. Following the method of George Eliot, she draws the scenes as a series of every day incidents happening in their natural sequence without any apparent regard as to the literary effect. Craddock moves from incident to incident in the routine of the mountain dweller's life as George Eliot let her fancy make much or little of the inconsequential flurries in the 19th century middle English country life. The culminations of the plots, the dramatic scenes, and unexpected denouements are all vivid witnesses to the writer's art. Many situations rise to the plane of dramatic intensity terminating in a strong, emotional denouement, realizing in maximum measure the several possibilities of the actor's parts. It would be very easy to degenerate into melodramatic rant and bombast in these sketches of elemental passions. Miss Murfree maintains to the contrary a firm grip upon the "spine of the story," finally turning the trivial incidents, the petty occasions, the com-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

munity events, into a harmonious composition wherein truth to life and perfect versimilitude are commingled into one graceful unity.

The plots, and the situations in which they are laid, demand moderate length. In this aspect of the work Craddock has erred somewhat. Her inclinations to be accurate and to faithfully represent the actual state of mountain life have led her to trespass upon the reader's good will in ~~too~~ too large a degree; for it would be well if she realized, "not that the story need be long, but that it will take a long time to make it short." The capacity for sustained attention is exhausted by the lengthy exposition of "pathetic circumstance and dramatic relations" wherein the successive incidents are fraught with their own particular high, emotional tension. It is undoubtedly this tedium of emotional crises or series of continually exciting situations that is largely responsible for the impression that the volumes suffer from sameness or monotony.

Individually these movements are of considerable intrinsic worth. Commanding scenes replete

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

with pure dramatic fire stand out in silhouette against this varied background. Notable is the arrest of the militant "Prophet" of Great Smoky standing in the pulpit delivering an impassioned recital of his fall from divine grace; at this tense moment the hostile sheriff strides to the rude rostrum and evicts the trembling orator from his stand of sacred authority. The climax is reached when the officer of the law lays his instrument of authority upon the open Bible; "Ye can read, pa'son," he said. "Ye kin read the warrant fur your arrest."

Miss Murfree's plots are constructed with an idea of presenting a whole group of characters, their friends and kindred of the clan, and the miscellaneous what not that may perchance drift across the rural horizon. She is apparently determined to give the characterization of the existence accurately, fully, and with a dispassionate scientific method tempered by whatever art such a course would permit. She is not tempted primarily by any allurements of artistic perversion for art's sake. It is this very quality that lends

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the most valuable property and enduring attraction to her romances. Hawthorne had no such particular mission of psychological investigation, yet the spirit of Craddock is of the same artistic type. As a consequence of the former's freedom from giving such an absolute portrayal, his plots have "a unity, an unwavering creative purpose" which is not the fortunate possession of Craddock.

This is not intended to deny the creative ability to Craddock. It is observed merely to illustrate the material difference in the limiting circumstances, for Miss Murfree is undoubtedly one of the most original, most creative of the Southern writers. Hawthorne constructed primarily with an artist's eye; Craddock with the finely adjusted ideal of a scientific delineation. The former possessed an infinite capacity for subordination and synthesis — in large measure indicative of his talent; the latter writer, from the nature of her material, could not produce such artistic contrasts and dramatic unities.

Within the realm of the humble mountain tragedies lies the corresponding germ, the identical

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

primitive spark that burst into such immortal flame in the closing scenes of "Hernani." The same pride of race and racial instinct, the same elemental passions pulsate in the minds of actors, the same devoted, self-sacrificing love of woman throbs in the untutored mountaineers as in the more polished players of Hugo. Consequently, it is a matter for little amazement that the romances and tales of Craddock instantly attracted serious literary attention.

Able and extraordinary powers of description have proved a fruitful source of dispraise. In the majority of Miss Murfree's works the unwarrantable use of numerous descriptions is a very serious detriment, one that has furnished much ground for those who are inclined to depreciate her powers. That she is endowed with a nicety of imagination, a sharpness of perception, alert at once to detect the most subtle shades and tints in the natural kaleidoscope, and, at the same moment, to translate her impressions into passages of inspiring beauty, is not to be denied. Perhaps it is her purpose so to imbue the whole fabric of the

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

sketches with the dominating beauty of the mountain scenery that the entire composition is laden with the natural atmosphere. To produce such a result her facility in this direction would demand far less of nature descriptions than she has used; doubtless the temptation to employ such a faculty, over which she has the most complete mastery, was one she found difficult to resist. The constant insertion of irrelevant bursts of ecstasy over the multitude of mountain beauties, in situations of dramatic importance, is discouraging to those following eagerly the fortunes of a Jack Espey or a Cely Shaw, yet to insert some telling piece of natural beauty as a peaceful interlude to relieve the emotional tension is a mark of skillful dramatic handling. It is a stable method of many masters. Shakespeare has "Duncan" remark upon the beauty of his fatal resting place soon to be filled with the horror of an outraged hospitality.

"This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses."

B A L E

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

By this a distinct and useful purpose was accomplished.

Her skillful depicting of interior arrangements, of mountain dens and moonshiners' retreats, of the simple household duties and domestic difficulties, reflects a dexterous use of the scenic properties. No one watches the setting of the stage with more care than Miss Murfree. She has the faculty of differentiating between the several values of light and shade, of delicate colorings and transient reflections in the natural setting, so that the entire background may be in harmony with the figures in the rural stage. Everywhere there are the most tangible signs that Craddock is making a determined effort to follow the commandment of Poe — constant creation of an atmosphere.

Miss Murfree possesses that remarkable power to transmute the illusive witchery of mountain grandeur into the dispassionate garb of prose. Her love of nature is a dominant, vitalizing bond which she submits to with grace and genuine love for it. She seems to experience the delight

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

of a Lamartine in the seductive charms of a magnificent landscape bathed in the voluptuous sheen of a springtime day. Rioting in a galaxy of expressions for the multitude of color varieties in a manner to rival a Swinburne in the gracious flow of language about a trivial topic. "Bronze-green," "chrome-green," "slate gray," "ultramarine," "lapis lazuli," and "azure" deck the page until the scene rises in all its impressive magnificence as an actual, visual experience. Ruskin exclaimed about the light upon the Campagna, "I cannot call it color, it was a conflagration," likewise the reader must be moved to exclaim upon the dazzling beauties of this virgin wilderness in the hills. On every hand the rosy-flushed azalea, the mountain laurel, the snow-white lily of the Chilhowee, the shy woodland violet in its dusky lavender hood, form beds of perfume beneath the resinous pines; down these natural vistas between the shaded tree boles the stately cumulous clouds ride before the background of a Southern topaz sky.

Through her inclination to the beauties of the sky, Miss Murfree has made herself a veritable

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

literary astronomer. The stars and comets, the manifestations of celestial phenomena, are made to do duty as agents of the plot machinery. "His Vanished Star" and many other tales utilize the superstitious awe in which the ignorant and unlettered hold the terrifying oddities in the natural scheme of things. She is a well informed and competent observer of the celestial happenings. The use and reference to the sky and cloud effects, to the sunsets and the commingling of color in the heavens, are frequent and ably done — a masterly and experienced hand executing charming descriptive effects.

Every story is replete with the devotion of a nature lover. There is something of Thoreau in the sketches of the woodland creatures and the homes of the inhabitants of these trackless realms with the many mysteries of the natural storehouse. The swaying pines and chestnuts, the rhododendron and the mountain lily, are as accurately etched upon the imagination as if transmuted to the printed page by some mysterious alchemy. With that photographic exactness in

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

description that has so distinguished Kipling, Miss Murfree manages to tell her view of natural phenomena as well as to portray with every semblance of actuality the character of her mountain acquaintances. Not alone possessing an ample astronomical knowledge, she has combined with this a keen watchfulness for the variations of animal and plant life. Through each page the scientific nature lover is constantly in evidence. The geological formations of Great Smoky and the Chilhowee are presented with singular fidelity to detail.

Craddock's powers of description are not confined, however, to the portrayal of natural phenomena. The physical characteristics of the people, the oddities of speech and dress, the interiors of their homes and the illicit stills, are masterfully presented to the eye. There is the pervading evidence of an artist's sense for harmonious color schemes and vivid contrasts reveling in this unexplored field of creative work.

A robust style, distinguished by its unusual clarity and masculine method, is the salient feature

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

of this author's exposition. A generous use of epithet, varying from the prosaic to the most poetic turns of speech, as she becomes inspired with the grandeur of the gorgeous panorama spread before the eye on every hand. At times her remarkable power in describing the superb solitudes of the Bald and Chilhowee leads her into digressions and lengthy ramblings in the very execution of which the style loses its chief virtue, seeming to share in the vacillating forgetfulness. It matches in tone and color the ecstasy of the author, who seems at intervals utterly enraptured with the scenery, oblivious of every other claim; instead of the terse, clear Anglo-Saxon words mated to a distinctly American landscape and a particularly English people, she borrows from all sources terrifying, high-sounding phrases inappropriate for such an occasion. Phrases too lengthy, too sonorous, making of each scene that should have been distinguished for its simplicity, instead, a top-heavy, irrelevant word display.

This feature has worked a most pernicious result. In those very passages of superb descrip-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

tive analysis, she demolishes the true ring of each sentence by either some characteristic repetition which has occurred numberless times elsewhere or some ill-chosen vagrant from another type of vocabulary. While the author has in general handled well the descriptive phrases, the delicately modulated structures, the perfectly adapted sentences, nevertheless, the perfection of the entity has been visibly marred by such lapses from a purely graceful style. Such, for instance, as referring to the sun in the evening as "the last segment of the vermillion sphere"; cows called with seeming gusto "bovine vagrants"; the moon repeatedly "gibbous"; the simple brook is described as "the tinkling of a mountain rill — a keen detached appogiatura rising occasionally above the monody of its munderous flow." She frequently refers to the small insects as having songs "charged with somnolently melodious post-meridian sentiment." Endless recurrence of this brand of phrase must of necessity mar a composition no matter how masterly.

Yet rarely has dialogue been more finely ren-

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

dered in native dialect than in Craddock's lines. Everywhere resplendent with the gift of interpreting the myriad lineaments of the shy mountaineers, bounteously supplied with an experience calculated to penetrate the mysteries of their reticent, retired dispositions, nurtured in the solitude of these coves and forests, Craddock has accomplished a marvelously accurate exposition of the countless phases of human nature in the hill country. The ability to keep in true perspective the slow, ruminating conversation of this hasteless people, with their countless seeming digressions and irrelevant statements, while concurrently to maintain the interest of the spectator, finally using each digression, every single reference, as a separate pigment for the closing dramatic composition, requires the mastery of an essentially delicate art. Within a single speech the reproduction of a dialect and the psychologic interpretation of the speaker's character are reflected in the drawing intonations, the somnolent manner of enunciation, or the flitting from topic to topic in the speech of some of the characters, as a "Miss Bates" of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Jane Austin's imagination, or the meandering conversation of a "Mrs. Nickleby."

Miss Murfree has been charged with an undue amount of such conversational digressions as well as the unnecessary wealth of description. This particular criticism is not well founded. The numerous digressions have been made because of the need to insert suitable agents which should be at once attractive in themselves and at the same time maintain the semblance of real conditions in the mountaineer's method of speech. A cursory view of the speeches and tales as a production conforming to some particular rule of dramatic unity is highly unjust; there are real lives portrayed in these volumes and fidelity to actual conditions must in justice be well considered also.

Again, these digressions furnish in large measure a means of indicating those lapses into slow thought between his fitful efforts at conversation when the mountaineer is aroused, perchance, from his constitutional apathy. Thus it is that, in numerous cases, the apparently purposeless digressions and unwarranted employment of nature de-

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

scriptions, faultless and beautiful in themselves, have in reality a justified use, demanded by actual conditions.

Properly controlled, dialect is a potent instrument. Native speech is so often palely imitated by a mere translation of the author's own thoughts into the ridiculous jargon composed of note book oddities. It can rise to the dignity of the greatest literature no matter how humble the source. A realistic treatment of such a subject can only come through the writer's absorbing the very spirit of the people. To Miss Murfree's everlasting credit she has been the most faithful expositor of her characters in reproducing the genius of their primitive American life in the tangible form of a perfect dialect. Whatever service in the perpetuation of the Hoosier dialect and the spirit of the Middle West James Whitcomb Riley has performed, it has been duplicated in point of historical trustworthiness by Charles Egbert Craddock.

With the combination of a faultless dialect and a thoroughly intimate knowledge of the laws, customs, and superstitions, Miss Murfree has suc-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ceeded in presenting a singularly accurate delineation. Historians may come and social philosophers may go, but it may be safely ventured that no more intrinsically worthy contribution to the annals of the nation has been made than the perpetual embodiment of a little known section of people in the Southern Mountains through the accurate agency of their simple dialect. What an intimate reflection of their nature for those who may pursue the records in the future!

One definitive feature of every piece of writing in this author's work is her profound knowledge of things legal. Before her identity was established, this feature was considered the most tangible evidence that "that man Craddock" was a lawyer. Mr. Aldrich, then editor of the "Atlantic Monthly," by whom many of her manuscripts were published, prided himself upon his addressing his letters to "M. N. Murfree, Esq." It was something of a revelation when a quiet young woman presented herself in the editorial rooms as Charles Egbert Craddock. This knowledge of the law was gained as a part of her edu-

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

tion, which included a large reading course on legal subjects. Her association with her brothers must have given her the markedly masculine view which is a prominent characteristic of all her writings. From this source, also, must have come her grasp of boy character which she has so fittingly used in mountain personages — most of all in her juveniles — “Down The Ravine,” “The Young Mountaineers,” “The Story of Keendon Bluffs,” and “The Champions.”

Slow, ambling, a tiresome tedium of speech may characterize the mountaineer much of his time in these tales, but at intervals his passionate utterances reveal that he has lost nothing of the trenchant, virile power of his Anglo-Saxon tongue. Disuse or infrequent application does not hinder him from attaining in the heights of his emotion the most biting sarcasm or the most virulent ridicule. The noble enthusiasm and angry denunciation of the fanatic circuit-rider stir his rude audience to religious frenzy with as compelling an utterance as ever passed the lips of a vigorous people.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Humor, with its bed-fellow pathos, abounds in this virile speech. Touches like this are frequent: “ ‘Mister Stubbs,’ Rufe say mighty perlite; ‘ fooling with me is like makin’ faces at a rattlesnake; it may be satisfying to the feelin’s, but t’aint safe.’ ” All of which meant to insinuate the ferocity of Rufe.

And again reference is made to the delays of the law in a sarcastic, half-wit manner as in this: “ ‘Yes, sir, ‘minds me of a slow mule-race all the time, the law does,’ said Bowles.” The unconscious humor in Jane Elmiry’s speech, who was a domestic general of no mean ability, to her sick husband who had querulously asked for his nourishment. “ ‘Tain’t time yit,’ replied the patient wife. “ ‘The Doctor ‘lowed ez the aig must be spang fraish; an’ ez old Topknot lay ter the minit every day, I’m a ‘waitin’ on her.’ ” The crowning touch is the quavering recollection of an old dame in admonishing the feeble rising generation. “ ‘I ‘member when I was a gal whisky was so cheap that up to the store at the settlemint they’d have a bucket set full o’ whisky an’ a gourd

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

free fur all comers, an' another bucket alongside with water to season it. An' the way that thar water lasted war surprisin'; that it war."

Through it all, there is the infinite pathos of life, full red-blooded life, pulsating with very human foibles and emotions, throbbing with very personal ambitions and desires. Features of this stamp make the books intensely interesting. It is the genuine humanity in every tale that makes the constant, vital appeal to every one with a spark of interest in his fellows. To the most indifferent of readers, whether he prefers the romance or no, there must be borne in upon him the realization that these speeches are not the smoke of an artist's fancy, but are the intensely human utterances of a vigorous people.

Conforming to the main purposes in a series of tales like these, Miss Murfree has realized them both. The first is an artistic one; the other is a consciously ethical, intellectual ideal. Craddock has shown power versatile enough to execute an excellent story, full of dramatic possibilities, to pursue the plan with scientific methods,

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

and to induce a lively interest throughout the narrative. She possessed the ability to transmit to paper the seductive charm of mountain color, the murmur of a hidden rill, a sketch of homely domestic life, or a fiery speech of a religious fanatic, mingling these factors into an entity of surprising beauty. Of the two purposes, the purely educational or didactic is the most superior feature, the most lasting recommendation. Both purposes have many faults in execution. The latter purpose, however, is a possession of more than transient interest. The works are distinctly social studies. Craddock has written many stories about several localities in the South, but such volumes as these will be the basis of her reputation as a Southern writer. There is ample justification for this type of works, if justification is needed at all, in that such stories are a trustworthy impersonation, a memorable record, of a little known division of the English race whose ancestors a few generations removed dared to conquer the wilderness, to aid in rearing a stupendous fabric of human liberty; of men many of whom furnished

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

hosts of the bravest in the ranks of the Federal and Confederate armies distinguishing themselves by signal service and uncompromising rectitude of character. A romantic history of such a society takes its place with the lives of great men and the narrations of great events; it makes a distinct contribution to national annals. That is the essential reason for its creation and is the argument for the perpetuation of these books as a vital part of the literature.

In fact, this is the point whereon this whole group of writers on Southern subjects rest much of their claim to continued recognition. Allen, Cable, Harris and Page each has devoted himself to a particular phase of Southern existence, whether of a whole state or of a large section of his home land; and Miss "Craddock" has likewise conspicuously devoted her talents with keenness and success. As Mill philosophizes upon the economics of national policy, "no nation in which eccentricity is a matter of reproach can be in a healthy state," so we see in the variety and mixture of our own eccentrically assembled peoples

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

and communities a healthy and prosperous phase of the Southland. The study of the oddly mixed factions and races is one of considerable worth to the nation, besides its historic value or because it is an artistic addition to the literature.

This school could be aptly termed, therefore, the *Social Historians*. They have deviated from the beaten course in historical novels where a war, a revolution, or the gaining of an empire is the basic fabric for the construction of the drama. Their mission is the recording of the social history of many phases and angles of Southern life through the vehicle of a story or romance whose most permanent interest lies in its relation to actual conditions, not primarily to the rules of an art or to the progress of some national aggrandizement.

Miss Murfree belongs distinctly to this school of *Social Historians*. In this particular field, her power is wide and far-reaching. Here is an unique addition to national, to Southern literature. She may have made some errors, may have committed many mistakes in technique; but when

CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK

the entire evidence is brought in, the tales of Charles Egbert Craddock will stand specimens of high creative ability and of high dramatic development replete with a wealth of humor, a wealth of human appeal, a wealth of genuine eloquence.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

Ms. A. 1. 1.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

*“I feed the clouds, the rainbows, and the flowers,
With their ethereal colours; the Moon’s Globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers,
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe.”*

—Shelley.

IN one of the tiers of the Corcoran Art Gallery hangs a striking picture of an old Southern homestead at twilight. The Grecian portico is barely discernible through the evening haze; the fan-shaped transom and the ancient doorway have faded imperceptibly into the enmassed fast-gathering shadows; on one side the columns are hidden in part by the delicate tracery of an overhanging beech; in the foreground, at the base of the stoop, the dimly outlined figures of a man and woman stand, clad in the mode of sixty years ago. The whole scene is bathed in the mellow sapphire tones of the departing Southern day.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Such a setting was typical of ante-bellum Kentucky life. Nowhere, perhaps, has the Creator been more bountiful with His gifts than in Kentucky's dominions; walled in on the east by the towering majesty of the Cumberland Mountains; skirted on the north by the turbulent Ohio and bordered on the west by the meandering tide of the Mississippi, this fertile blue grass region has ever abounded with all the natural blessings. What a glorious expanse must have met the eyes of the first caravan of settlers, when they gained the summit of the Cumberland Peaks! The undulating forest lay as a verdant foot-rug at the base of some gigantic throne, interwoven by silvery skeins of water flashing in the clear Kentucky sunlight. The priceless lands of the new world became the home of the stanch English and Scotch-Irish who immigrated from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas to found the empire of the West — first "virgin bride" of the United States.

It was among these environs of his native State that James Lane Allen has arisen, the master

JAMES LANE ALLEN

painter of the Old and the New. The depicting of the quaint old characters of his home; the humorous incidents of the life about him; the delineating of the ideals of his friends and neighbors; the painting of the homely phases of town and country existence mark him as a genius with the invaluable gift of penetrative insight, sufficient to lay bare the workings of his characters in all the integrity and force of reality. He has fittingly realized that the true field of his intellect and powers is among the surroundings of his life; no excursion is necessary into the tropical realms for the exotic beauties of nature, for his home is her riotous storehouse; no far expedition is demanded to find nobility of mind and character, for he has his acquaintances; no foray is essential into the unknown for adventures, as the more vital tragedies of his State abound about him.

Mr. Allen has variously touched the first beginnings of life in his State; has perpetuated the memories of the ante-bellum homesteads with no less subtle fidelity than that effort of the master

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

of the brush whose work hangs upon the walls of the Art Gallery; has outlined, at other times, the results of civil disunion whose consequences were so disastrous to himself; finally, he revealed the lives of his fellow men amid the new conditions of the modern régime. Throughout his productions the love of nature is paramount; this is his mission — to stencil on the images of men his home land as it is, where the nature's forces and his neighbors' play their little drama.

As a dreamer and thinker, the mysterious beauties of Mother Earth have a powerful hold upon Mr. Allen's imagination. The tale of "A Kentucky Cardinal," and its companion "Aftermath," are gems of nature description, mingling her laws and decrees with the pathetic lives of his characters. The whole theme abounds with the exuberant, plenteous moods of nature described with heartfelt sympathy and classic taste; the old bachelor and the noble woman, his neighbor, have their destinies, their courtship and marriage, their loves and sorrows, interwoven with the identical tragedies of nature's humbler creatures — the

JAMES LANE ALLEN

Cardinal and his kind. Even the sorrows of this brilliant songster amid the cedars sound the note of disaster soon to conclude the tale.

The naïve simplicity of the courtship of Adam Moss, "such a green, cool, soft name," and Georgianna had its beginnings in the garden, its continuance across the hedge, its culmination in the little natural paradise that the lover had cared for and tended. At the sad ending of this loving couple's union, the whole choir of nature seemed to send up a hymn of everlasting grief after the passage of this pure-souled woman; the Cardinal lost his mate; Adam Moss lost his; and with his little son walked again amid the "chaliced flowers" of his garden and fast budding orchard for consolation — the tragedy of nature healed by herself.

The follower of Thoreau and Audubon, his fellow of the Kentucky woods, he has stepped beyond their realm and brought a multitude of the great Mother's gifts to dwell around the abodes of the men and women whose lives he fondly unfolds. Within the covers of this volume there is tender-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ness, there is simplicity, there is the ineffaceable sweetness of the poem in the printed form of prose, yet unshorn of the subtle beauties and harmonies of the setting. It remains a simple, pathetic story reaching straight to the hearts of men.

In the early days of the State's history, Lexington was settled by that sturdy race of pioneers who had pushed over the Blue Ridge, the Alleghanies, and the Cumberland passes into the fresh fields of the new land. The vitality and vigor of this community, the customs and manners of the pioneer life, the struggle of determined men and women to establish an outpost of civilization, the rise of the church, all are embodied in the short story "Flute and Violin"; but there is contained something more intimate and more personal than the historical references and setting. It is the life of the Reverend James Moore, and that of his charge, David. A grasp of no usual power is betrayed in Mr. Allen's manner of delineating the relationship of these two; the minister of God and the fatherless waif. The preacher, lifting up his

JAMES LANE ALLEN

soul to his Master in the exhortation to his back-woods brethren, has one point in common with the poverty-stricken urchin — that point is music. The cold, keen soul of the pastor is elevated above the plane of logical and earthly things in the sweet melodies of the flute; the lonely, God-forsaken soul of the crippled boy is fluttered in ecstasy at the magic notes of the violin.

There is one incident, full of pathos, full of the divine tragedy of the past, that stamps this story as classic. It is the straightforward appeal to all that man calls noble and sublime. The penniless, maimed youngster was enabled to gratify his intense desire to see the wonderful "Wax Figures," which had just arrived in the back-woods town, through a petty theft; he entered timidly, conscience-stricken, and, as he lifted his eyes, the portrait of Christ confronted him in its silent, appealing majesty. "It was a strange meeting. The large rude painting possessed no claim to art. But to him it was an overwhelming revelation, for he had never seen any pictures, and he was gifted with an untutored love of paint-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ing. Over him, therefore, it exercised an entralling influence, and it was as though he stood in the visible presence of One whom he knew the parson preached of and his mother worshipped."

The place of action shifts in the next of his stories to that time in the early thirties when the great plague visited Kentucky. Among the dancing and singing beauties, in the ranks of the upright and fallen, among the statesmen and generals, in the mansions and huts, the pestilence came and took its toll.

How ironical are the movements of Fate! "King Solomon," the central figure of the tale bearing his name, has stood at auction before the jeering, laughing crowd in the public square and has been bought for thirteen dollars by a free negro "mammy" at a time when slavery was the most potent factor in the life of the State; this great hulk of a man has stood before the crowd a wreck of moral manhood, besotted and full of the lowest passions of a human being; he had fallen to such a depth that digging a ditch was too lofty an occupation.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

The plague came with its deluge of disaster. The moaning of some dying human being, the rap of hammer on the coffins at the lumber yard, the creak of the death cart, were the only sounds arising from the stricken city; yet, not these alone, there was one more — the soft scrape and thud of "King Solomon's" shovel digging the graves. He, alone, had remained at the post. "King Solomon" had come into his own; moral sublimity had arisen from moral degeneracy. The sot and outcast was regenerated into the hero and the man.

Mr. Allen has drawn a striking picture of an incident on the return of the population. The court room was filled; "King Solomon" stood again in that room whence he had been sent a little while before to be sold for vagrancy. "The Judge took his seat and, making a great effort to control himself, passed his own eyes slowly over the court-room. All at once he caught sight of "King Solomon" sitting against the wall in an obscure corner; before any one could know what he was doing, he hurried down and walked up to

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the vagrant and grasped his hand. He tried to speak, but could not. Old King Solomon had buried his wife and daughter — buried them one clouded midnight, with no one present but himself.

"Then the oldest member of the bar started up and followed the example; and the other members, rising by a common impulse, filed slowly back and one by one wrung that hard and powerful hand."

In "Two Gentlemen of Kentucky" James Lane Allen has struck a very sympathetic chord in Southern natures, and in those of the world at large. The results of war are always sad; the passing of a brave but broken man who fought nobly in such a war is sadder still. The simplicity, the kindness, the bravery of a broken man, the passing onward of master and slave, the one to become a man made still nobler by his responsibilities for those under his care; the other to become ennobled in character by his devoted care of those above him. We must note the two old men, the one white, bent, noble of face and character; the other

JAMES LANE ALLEN

black, equally crooked, acquiring the fine traits of his master; these two walking feebly arm in arm to their last resting place — the end of the old régime.

Mr. Allen's work is not all sombre and pathetic; humorous and quaintly shrewd touches abound. The texts to the number of seven embroidered on the coat tails of Peter's preaching garment are described with humorous appreciation and telling, ludicrous effect.

Amid the green fields of the promised land, a band of religious exiles founded a new home for the establishment of their order; it was the society of the Trappist Monks. The order was founded some nine centuries ago by De Rance in the gloomy forests of Normandy; so, here, these silent men pushed into the wilderness to gain the seclusion that their souls craved for meditation and prayer. They found it in this virgin land. Consequently, to-day there is located in one of the most beautiful sections of the State an ancient abbey surrounded by the fields of the brotherhood; about the grim buildings the smiling land rolls in

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

sweeping swells until it meets the clear blue of a Kentucky sky.

Mr. Allen's short-story, "The White Cowl," is laid within the grey environs of the old abbey. The strange career of the young Kentucky priest who had never known the name of woman or seen her image since early childhood; the struggle to conquer the forbidden longing — the beating of the spirit of youth against the walls; the meeting of the woman and the renunciation of the cloistered life; the parting of the aged abbot and his beloved disciple — all are visualized in tragic array before the eye.

The ill fated conclusion of the tale has a power which grips the heart. "Father Palmeon," the young priest, no longer young, returns from the world, his wife and child buried in the same grave; he himself a broken, dispirited man, scarcely concerned with the vast domain without. He comes to beg readmittance which must, by rules of the order, be refused. He is received merely as a guest, and, within a short time, worn by the rigors of sorrow and penitence, he gives up his lofty

JAMES LANE ALLEN

spirit, passing hence upon the ashes and straw allotted to a dying brother. Mr. Allen sums up the story pithily, "Love — duty — the world; in these three words lie all the human, all the divine, tragedy."

The setting of "Sister Dolorosa" is also laid in an old nunnery in the valley of Gethsemane. The same type of struggle is thrown upon the screen. The author dresses it in the wonderful garb of which his mastery proclaims his genius — the sad scenes of the love, the struggle, the sacrifice of a lonely woman. Everywhere, pervading the atmosphere of his stories are the forces of nature at work, particularly those of sex relationship foreshadowing his future efforts in evolution and the slow creation of present man.

What an artist's eye for color James Lane Allen possesses! His description of Sister Dolorosa, her face and garments, at the time of her meeting Helm, brings the vivid pictures before the eye, reveling in shade and tone, with all the intricate lighting of the original. "A gleaming as white lilies against the raven blackness of her dress; and

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

with startling fitness of posture, the longest finger of the right hand pointed like a marble index towards a richly embroidered symbol over her left breast — mournful symbol of a crimson heart pierced by a crimson spear. Whether attracted by the lily-white hands or by the red symbol, a butterfly, which had been flitting hither and thither in search of the gay roses of the summer gone, now began to hover nearer and nearer, and finally lighted unseen upon the glowing spot. Then, as if disappointed not to find it the bosom of the rose, or lacking hope and strength for further quest — there it rested, slowly fanning with its white wings the tortured emblem of the divine despair."

Throughout the writer reveals the forces of nature playing upon the actions of men; he outlines with consummate skill the influence of natural laws.

While the last tale, "Posthumus Fame," of the book containing the series above is hardly up to the standard of its companions, yet, even here, we must concede that delicate mastery of word and

JAMES LANE ALLEN

structure whose beauty is a continual source of delight. Somewhat similar to the classic forerunner of similar type — that of Hawthorne — it is a creation of singular allegorical force. The pageant of those who seek future fame and remembrance passes in sorrowful procession before the young sculptor: — the unknown poet, the broken soldier, the hungry minister, the bereaved mother, the penitent, painted woman, the beauty. Each in turn lays bare a glaring nakedness of soul, the vain hope for remembrance by posterity. The mockery, the hollow pleas and the useless attempts to perpetuate their names in marble, of those who have failed to carve them upon the hearts of their fellows, is a sermon of more than uncommon power.

Coincident with these short-stories are a number of essays, each one of which was originally designed to accompany a tale in the other book. Because, however, of pressing work the author was never able to complete, fully, his purpose. They are a series of able, clear sighted essays exhibiting a keen knowledge of character and a

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

shrewd penetration into Kentucky life, tempered by a fine sense of humor and an innate sympathy. They are delightful for the clarity, the lucidity of the views of town and rural life in Kentucky — the peaceful, not the bloody impression so long unjustly associated with the State.

The "Blue-Grass Region" is particularly fine. He says in part — "grass is almost Kentuckian," and a little further on "the County Court Day in Kentucky" is full of the ridiculous and the humorous amid the gathering of the country folk. Throughout the whole picture the subtle appreciation of the humanity of that life, the delicacy of insight, and the gift of aptly worded speech, mark it a book of genuine worth. Those who follow the work will find it to be a source of information as to the life and manners of that period, and, as such, it will remain a treasured record. The County Court Day is fast passing into memory.

"The Choir Invisible" is based upon a previous story from the pen of Mr. Allen entitled "John Gray," which, in the subsequent volume, was considerably enlarged and improved. Once more the

JAMES LANE ALLEN

author is amid the earlier scenes of his work — in the Colonial settlement of Lexington amid the virgin forests. The idea of the whole is the gradual evolution of a strong man's soul and his hopeless love for a noble woman married to another; it is essentially the problem novel, yet so shorn of the repulsive features of the type by the artistry of its handling as to command intense interest and admiration.

The key-note of the entire production is contained within the few words of the same Reverend James Moore — "And so the whole past sounds to me; it is the music of the world, it is the vast choir of the ever-living dead"; and, elsewhere it is stated, "he too has long since joined the choir invisible of the immortal dead."

In this book James Lane Allen exhibits his exceptional familiarity with early Kentucky history; the manners and problems of the day, Virginia Colonial life and its influence; and the rise of his Alma Mater, Transylvania University.

The productions of Mr. Allen are constructed with the eye of a scientist dissecting, investigating,

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

illustrating, the results of powerful phenomena. A strong, virile man, a genius is such a phenomenon. So in his vigorous work, "The Reign of Law," the writer has attempted the unfolding of an unusually endowed man, born of commonplace parents; one who has to struggle to acquire his lawful and rightful heritage.

It is the time of the rise of the great project for building a University of Kentucky. The young country lad enters the Bible College by dint of two years stint and heartrending sacrifice. The vital disillusionment; the return of the prodigal, of the soul, not of the flesh; the sweet womanliness of Gabriella; are of fundamental worth, not only for the intrinsic interest of the story, but also as a psychological study, a profound analysis of human motives, a satire of happy strokes on the dull, rigid religious intolerance of the hidebound churches.

Aside from these notable features of his effort, the author has interwoven ideals of exceptional merit, furnishing illuminating side-lights. While speaking of the struggle to erect and build up a

JAMES LANE ALLEN

great University, he says in part — “ For such an institution must in time have taught what all its courthouses and all its pulpits — laws human and divine — have not been able to teach; it must have taught the whole commonwealth to cease murdering. Standing there in the heart of the people’s land, it must have grown to stand in the heart of their affections; and so standing, stand for peace. True learning always stands for peace. Letters always stand for peace. And it is the scholar of the world who has ever come into it as Christ came; to teach that human life is worth saving and must be saved.”

If the book possessed no other merit than that of the first chapter, an essay devoted to an outline of the methods of growing hemp, it would maintain an enviable position in the fields of Southern letters. The broad knowledge of the cultivation of this important commodity, and the telling accuracy with which the method of its production and its social value is sketched, mark the author a man of versatility as well as high scholarly attainments.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

The elemental passions of nature are always interesting; the frank confession of them borders dangerously near the repulsive. "Summer in Arcady" deals with these fundamental forces of animal nature — the favorite theme with Mr. Allen is sex and its relationships. If artistry can cover and hide beneath its fold the bare, repulsive features of the ideas involved, if style can dress the nakedness of reality in a garb sufficient to soothe the sensitiveness of critics, then well and good. Like Tolstoi's "Resurrection," only in somewhat similar measure, this little idyl of the Kentucky countryside treats of passion growing into the sublime love — self sacrifice; the growth of sensuous pleasure into the realm of soul delight. Throughout the entire sketch there is the predominating note of the inexorable laws of nature. It is nature in all of her moods abounding as the machinery and decorations of the story; the softly lighted Kentucky woods are as prolific as the riotous actions of youth.

Humorous, half sarcastic touches frequently occur like the following: "Has it ever been re-

JAMES LANE ALLEN

marked that when a scandal like this occurs in a country neighborhood, somebody soon afterwards gives a dinner to several ladies?"

As a continuance of this same bold note, the latest novel of James Lane Allen, the "Mettle of the Pasture," deals with the imprudent follies of youth and the resultant tragedies. It is the favorite saying of the writer that close communion with Mother Earth has given the people of the Kentucky countryside the vitality and hardihood of blue-grass and limestone lands. Within this volume he delineates the noble characteristics of Kentucky womanhood in all the purity and faith of Southern blood; he reveals with brilliancy the meaning of human spite; the powers of constant friendship, but, above all and foremost, he is primarily the evolutionist, the scientist, the naturalist. The character of Rowan is the result of two conflicting types of humanity: on the one hand are ranged the qualities of the gay, pleasure loving sportsman, on the other are those of the theologian, the scholar, the jurist, the supporter of moral and statute laws. The boy is made to

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

stand before the portraits of his forefathers and recall the causes of his conflicting nature as he recounts the pathetic character of his downfall; the scene is impressive, but considerably marred by the too evident creaking of plot machinery. Within it all, there are passages of humor and sarcasm — his apt remarks concerning the legal profession of the old town.

Mr. Allen is at once the product and the apostle of evolution. He has evolved himself from the provincial position that was the customary birth-place, and, sad to state, the resting place, of many of his compeers. He has risen above the plane of sectional narrowness: the themes that have received treatment from his pen possess the significance of world literature. The method of presentation he uses has something of an air of dignity, a profound consciousness of artistic power, that sits well upon the comprehensive character of his studies.

Courage is the true expression of his attack upon such difficult citadels. Versatility is his praise and due. It is from a sense of justice that

JAMES LANE ALLEN

we concede him this reward; the bold venture into the novel, to himself, sphere of nature study, of esthetic principle, and the correspondingly successful manner with which he acquitted himself give ample grounds for the decision.

A romantic background was at hand. Like his fellows of this school of *social historians*, he enjoys the distinguishing mark of intense interest in his fellows. The life of his people was to him one stupendous kaleidoscopic drama. Moliere's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" suggests the reality, the attentive faculty to minutiae, that characterizes Allen and the distinguished French dramatist. There is something of the same quality of tragic humor in the man who did not know that he had been using prose all his life and the Rev. James Moore who did not seem to know that he had been a man all his life — until the widow kissed him. Rare unconsciousness of self as exhibited in these sagacious characters demands followers on both sides of the sea.

Allen has a poetic faculty. Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley must admit him to their midst

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

because of his delightful appreciation of the wonders in field and vale. The eternal sadness of these glorious wonders of the Creator sanctioned and controlled by the laws of evolution and selection, affect him deeply. As in Shelley's "To a Skylark" —

"Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought."

So in his stories he never breaks the shackles, never forgets the eternal order of sorrow and suffering in his poet's world of beauty. There is an ever-present strain of melancholy.

For relief from the pessimism of this view, he indulges in philosophy and theology. Charity and love are his creed; he must treat his villains even with a touch of regretful sympathy. Like Shakespeare, he could not bring himself to handle harshly those that erred; they were villains enough in character without the addition of an author's vindictive spirit.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

On the one side he must have lived with Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall; on the other he must have associated with Balzac and De Musset with a dash of De Maupassant. From the romantic and realistic schools, and from the cold philosophies of trained scientists, he has drawn material of inestimable value to himself. More commendable than this, he has not inclined violently toward either one group or the other. He has used a romantic Southern background and dealt in cosmopolitan modes of thought. He has achieved a double service. It is the South in truthful colors; and it is a presentation without the taint of objectionable sectionalism.

Mr. Allen has the habit of moralizing. That is a natural attribute of one who has reveled in ethical problems. The hypothesis of heredity, the dogmas of theology, and the theories of evolution are all in "The Reign of Law." It is a great contest of circumstances and environment versus nature. Unlike Dr. Faustus the hero meets a woman instead of a Mephistopheles, and gains thereby an extension perpetual of spiritual

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

life beyond the avaricious dreams of him who cried in Christopher Marlowe's tragic lines:

"let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!"

When in his moralizing mood, Mr. Allen has a fashion of taking his reader into his confidence. So many secrets are thrust upon his unsuspecting companion that he is wont to believe that Thackeray with his "Vanity Fair" and "Pendennis" have returned to claim their own. There is the same grasping of opportunities of making a sly pass at the follies of his characters and acquaintances.

The evolution of James Lane Allen can be resolved into four interesting groups of his works. The first of these divisions is "A Flute and Violin" and "The Blue-Grass Region of Kentucky," along with others treating distinctively of Kentucky life. Then the moods of nature receive attention in "A Kentucky Cardinal" and "Aftermath." Evolution and the moulding

JAMES LANE ALLEN

power of circumstance next gain a hearing in "A Summer in Arcady" and in "The Reign of Law," together with "The Mettle of the Pasture." Last of all comes the historical and problem novel in combination represented by "The Choir Invisible."

The whole tenor of the works of James Lane Allen can be attributed as the result of his career and positions held in life. He was born near Lexington on December 21st, in the year 1849, at a period which allowed him to attain an age sufficient to appreciate the multitudinous horrors of civil strife and feel keenly the results of disunion. His people were of English and Scotch-Irish descent from the State of Virginia and Pennsylvania. His boyhood and early life was spent amid hardships and cramping circumstances; he attended the Transylvania University at the time of its reopening just after the War, where he finally obtained a Master of Arts degree with, we may imagine, considerable sacrifice; thereafter he taught, became a professor of ancient languages in a small college founded by the

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

“Christian Church,” with the intention of entering Johns Hopkins University to obtain a degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The press of the call of literature, however, was too powerful, so that he gave up the idea of going further in the professional field of teaching, and devoted himself to literature. He is a man of broad, Saxon frame, surmounted by a generous, noble head with a fine face and graced with courteous manners; tall and stately, he is a typical specimen of the “old school” of Southern gentlemen.

Descended from a race whose foremost problems were those in which nature was vitally prominent, it was but natural that the love of his forefathers should make a notable impression upon his character and writings. Mr. Allen has consistently held his stories and essays to a Kentucky background, yet no less sweeping have the books become as efforts of national, international, universal appeal. The words from his pen are read abroad as at home. An evolutionist of vigorous views, a naturalist of comprehensive sympathy, a scientist of accurate vision, he has combined the

JAMES LANE ALLEN

trio into an intricate composition of classic value. His works are in part sweet and tender; in parts cold and keenly analytical; in places the fruit of intuitive genius; in whole sections and divisions, in the books themselves, there enters the pervading, guiding spirit of a master mind.

Within the covers of a single volume he attains the sublime pinnacle of emotion in the tragic fates of humanity, presents the ridiculous and ludicrous phases of contemporary existence; shrewdly satirizes the foibles and maskings of those men who make up his friends and companions. He touches all sides.

Page, Cable, Harris, Craddock, Russell all are essentially masters of dialect. Allen of this Southern school neglects it and boldly tells the simple tale of a frank and manly people. As a man who holds up the proverbial mirror of life as it is, there is a strong flavor of Dickens, as a lover of nature's moods he is the prose companion of his Southern fellow artist — Madison Cawein. The South should be justly proud of these, her sons, for as Doctor Johnson pithily

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

remarks, "the chief glory of every people arises from its authors."

When James Lane Allen is measured for his never failing love of mankind, for his sincerity and humanity, for his noble delineations of a noble race, his touching revelations of unknown phases of Kentucky life and manners, the South and posterity in general will hold him in treasured memory — for he has become a classic.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

“But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

WHEN Jesus of Nazareth held out his arms in invitation to the little children his act was an appeal to the whole realm of humanity. It was an appeal to that supreme characteristic of the heart, the innocence of childhood. Thus in calling to the children and offering protection, it was not only those particular little ones who were blessed, but an example was also presented to the whole of mankind; an example to stir the child nature of mankind, which must ever live in the hearts of all, young and old alike. The love of children and the power to appeal to that purity of outlook, which has always distinguished the very young, has ever been

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

the mark of a heart full of human sympathy and of spontaneous kindness.

Out of the South came one young man with the gift of this understanding. To him the human heart was a legend for his reading; he profited much and well by his study of it. Throughout, the life of Joel Chandler Harris, the possessor of this insight into the fine-spun senses of the soul, it was a veritable mission of his to transmit his pleasure in the simple and wholesome things of life in such form that thousands might enjoy it with himself. It was a noble mission, though a task fraught with long labor and continued effort. Yet to him reward was deemed generous were he but able to inspire a finer ideal of life or to impart a real source of enjoyment to the lives of others through the virtues of his simple narratives.

As Mr. Harris spoke of this reward himself, when dedicating his first book after fifteen years of popularity, to the illustrator of the last edition, Arthur Burdette Frost:

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

"I seem to see before me the smiling faces of thousands of children — some young and fresh, and some wearing the friendly marks of age, but all children at heart — and not an unfriendly face among them. . . . I seem to hear a voice lifted above the rest, saying: 'You have made some of us happy.'"

He realized that in itself the happiness and peace occasioned by his stories could be, at best, but transitory and illusive in its concrete, practical effect on his readers' lives. He sensed the truth, nevertheless, when he realized that the sum total of this power must culminate in a multitude of invisible forces acting for the intrinsic benefit of those who had followed his books.

This appreciation of his power to lighten the lives of his countless readers was sufficient. Within this same dedication the pith of his philosophy is breathed in the words: "Insubstantial though it may be, I would not at this hour exchange it for all the fame won by my mightier brethren of the pen." Akin to the peace of God must have come the satisfaction of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

having taken the child nature of your people into the regions of ideals where many found much worthy of seeking.

This lesson of good will to men was learned on a Georgia plantation in Putnam County. Harris was born there in 1848. It was a pleasant place to be born; in that land the people were of a kindly, sympathetic race that made the South of those years something beyond our understanding. The life was an isolated one; those gathered together there were intimate, intimate with one another and with the nature of their environment.

Young Harris was nurtured within the influence of this atmosphere. Through his negro interpreters the animal and vegetable kingdoms became a very human dominion. Their quaint philosophy, their gentleness of demeanor and the superstitions of the older negroes of the plantation became his without the asking, assimilated in that easy manner of an impressionable mind.

Educational facilities, though efficient in quality, were meager in number and widely scattered. Outside of the plantation library and the oc-

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

casional tutor, opportunities were thus rendered scarce indeed for any methodical scheme of education. Joel Chandler Harris managed to attend, however, before his twelfth birthday some few sessions of the Academy at Eatonton. No matter how small, it seems, a boys' school at that time, it must be called an Academy; a pleasing, yet harmless affectation.

The great events in the lives of those who lived in 1860 entered into his life history. As to what it meant, there has been an attempt to explain; a helpless silence is a small appreciation of the magnitude of the war's influence. About that period an advertisement appeared in *The Countryman* for a boy desirous of learning the printer's trade. With the spirit of a Benjamin Franklin, Harris accepted. *The Countryman* was edited by an accomplished gentleman, one Col. Turner, whose publication enjoyed the unique distinction of being the only one of its kind issued upon a plantation. After a short period Harris began his initial contributions to the newspaper; the little items under the name of *The Country-*

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

man's Devil indicated the beginning of his long and brilliant journalistic career. *On The Plantation* is, indeed, the intimate recollections of his personal experiences during that time, tempered somewhat by the glamour of intervening years.

Marked by a ceaseless eagerness to advance himself, he soon was given access to the extensive plantation library of Col. Turner. Under the benign influence of the old masters that were wont to hold forth in undisputed possession of a Southerner's book shelves, he gained an education, acquired a perspective of what true learning was, and saw the manner of great men in its use.

Within this period and before it and after it, an unconscious preparation for the duties of his subsequent work was silently moulding Joel Chandler Harris. From one occupation to another he fast became a competent journalist. He served an apprenticeship as secretary to William Evelyn, editor of the *Crescent Monthly*, which had been founded in New Orleans about 1866, and was devoted to literature, art, society, and science.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

It was a comprehensive field for a young man to understand. He also served on the *Macon Daily Telegraph* and the *Forsyth Advertiser*. William Tappan Thompson, editor of the *Savannah News*, became the first genuine literary patron of Harris. In view of his able manner of conducting himself in his journalistic work, he was invited to become a member of the editorial staff of the *Atlanta Constitution*. It devolved upon him to occupy the place of S. W. Small, who had been filling a portion of the editorial columns of his paper with a series of dialect sketches entitled stories of "Old Si." Mr. Harris, therefore, was induced to write several editorials himself in the manner and language of a distinctive negro character. As a result he created *Uncle Remus*. The points, the allusions, and the morals presented in these columns were placed before an appreciative and constantly widening audience with such excellent effect that within a short period Joel Chandler Harris found himself in the possession of an enviable reputation.

The cause of this unusual popularity is not dif-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

ficult to unearth. The finding of it means the revelation of those basic principles upon which Harris founded his achievements. The first of these is an unfailing humanity. Such a comprehension of the human heart and human nature as Harris possessed would in all likelihood amaze, were it not for the manner of its exhibition.

We see the result in a series of volumes that have proven power. We do not appreciate the delicate analysis, the sensitiveness, the subtlety, with which this master mind grasped the problems of mankind's varied life and manners and dissected them to a nicety, discarded the irrelevant, and as a dramatic sequence created a series of stories simple enough to point a telling moral to a child, humorous enough to demand genuine laughter from middle age, philosophical enough to please the jaded palate of those of advancing years. Where is the method? There is a purpose; you can hardly call it system. Summed up within the scope of several words, this explanation is sufficient — a generous humanity and a universal sympathy.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

There is something so personal, so intimate about these stories of Uncle Remus and the wiles of *Billy Biscuit* that at first glance the tales would be judged bits of autobiography — of the soul. No man, we say, could write these apparently vivid extracts of simplicity, imbue them with such personality, with such magnetism, and leave us a moral warning withal, and not then be guilty of revealing a small division of his inner-self. This is just what Harris did do. There is no conjuration and mighty magic; but only simplicity; he is simplicity himself in a charming ingenuousness of manner. The reader and the author become at once intimate friends; and, in defining this appealing quality of Joel Chandler Harris' books, you sum into a small compass much of his charm.

The philosophy of Mr. Harris as enunciated by *Uncle Remus* and his compeers is his distinctive feature. It is a genial philosophy, and it is a very personal philosophy. The tenets interspersed throughout the stories, however, have nothing of the savor of a Beyle-Stendhal egotism.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

They are composed of another spirit, rather, founded upon a more Christian comprehensiveness.

There is enough of the ego to make it the property of a single individual; there is sufficient, indeed the major portion is of this type of intimate communion with the problems of society to make it of practical value to him who may choose to listen. Many do listen. They absorb the moral truths, the genial observations, the fund of quaint satires without the least blush of a conscious assimilation. The stories contain it; it is theirs. No matter what the age, the reader digests his moral dose with a feeling of pleasure. Harris' philosophy is agreeable medicine, apparently, and we wonder why it is so. It is perhaps because of its good nature. Again, it may be that it contains a legion of things of interest to us, if we be youthful, or things of retrospection, if we have passed beyond the median line. When young, it seems that this story declares some dictum of the world. When in that state called by courtesy "not young," it seems that this man

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

Harris was a fellow of infinite sympathy; and such attractive truths as his deserve the emulation and commendation of experienced men. So it is the current travels.

Now, when *Brer. Possum* unjustly ends his career in the fire as a penalty for stealing the butter, which act he was not guilty of, *Uncle Remus* explains with a sigh: "In dis worril lots er folks is gotter suffer for udder folks' sins. . . . Tribbalashun seem like she's awaitin' roun' de cornder fer ter kotch one en on'un us, honey." You say that is a truism of experience; it is. Many, nevertheless, need this very truism, and many happily, may it be said, have learned the lesson under the agreeable tutelage of the old darky.

In the downfall and success of the various members of the animal kingdom are read lessons of their higher brethren. Appropriating the law of reasoning peculiar to *Uncle Remus*, the animals have a society akin to that of humans, with the gift of actual reason; they have many foibles, the identical failings. As a result of this original

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

order of creation, the shrewd mind animating the pertinent observations of *Uncle Remus* on the maskings of his familiars sees to it that these suggestions drift on to their legitimate destinations among the kings of reason — animal ethics are lessons in human ethics. The animals "Dey got pride; dey don't wanter be out 'n de fashion." Yet once again Ol' Craney-Crow observes, "I done fin' out in my time dat dey don't nothin' pay like perliteness, speshually if she's genuine."

✓ Again, upon a further analysis, there comes the inquiry what, indeed, makes these tales so universally acceptable. Philosophy is there, it is true, but however interesting as an ethical investigation, interest would be bound to flag. Characters and a plot are further shares in the success of the productions. There is something beyond all this valuable and useful series of attributes that causes the multitudes of these innumerable characters, truisms, facts and fiction, to cohere into one structure of universal attractiveness. The potent faculty that is thus inherent is the humor throughout every sketch. A humor

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

kindly in its bearing, apt in its application, comingling satire, gentle ridicule, and the legitimate failings of the actors in a pleasing whole. It is American humor; the basic, fundamental qualities are the breath of the spirit of a Mark Twain.

It is humor based upon exaggeration, upon ridiculous comparison. In the language of *Brer Rabbit*, commenting upon the high prices of the times: "I'm des about ez fat ez de mule mon had, which he hatter tie a knot in his tail fer ter keep 'im fum slippin' thro de collar." Satire comes in this manner: "He better be dead dan outer de fashion," as Miss Fox sagely remarked, upon the inadvertent killing of her husband, at the shrewd advice of the universal wit, villain, and leader, *Brer Rabbit*. The description by *Uncle Remus* of the young lady who was experiencing her first proposal of marriage was unique: "She got mad an' she got glad, a' den she had de all-overs."

The hero of all these tales of the animal world is, throughout, the engaging figure of *Brer Rabbit*. This creature, diminutive, shy, and simple, by

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

some transmutation justified by negro character, becomes in the beast tales of *Uncle Remus* a personage endowed with wit, cunning and a consummate duplicity that make him preëminently the king of his world. It is a bizarre species of worship. That the negro should find in himself the ability to appreciate those very qualities that he himself is furthest removed from is singular indeed. *Brer Rabbit* is first and foremost a creature of brains; brawn and muscle have been denied him, yet the happy sympathy of the black face feels that there is something due him. In this appealing state of helplessness they make him a conqueror through the agencies of his cunning art, the result of a very mischievous nature. Their purpose was not to exalt trickery or demean virtues, but was to show a just and intuitive love of triumph by the weak and good natured. We might with all fairness read some of their own history into the narrative of their familiar brethren of the fields. It is perhaps the tragic life of their race outcropping here in the work of their imagination.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

Uncle Remus is very careful on the points of *Brer Rabbit's* morals. Behind this circumspection, the guiding hand of Mr. Harris is constantly evident. Impressive as these narratives would be to many, he would but defeat his purpose were he to fail in a warning of the rascality in some of *Brer Rabbit's* methods. It is a warning, however, conveyed by a subtle method. Sometimes by a hint of the ancient narrator, again through the sheer good natured daring of this small creature the point is made impressive by the triumph of a negative quality of virtue.

Through these multitudes of shrewd schemes an opportunity is being afforded constantly to display the humor of the situation. *Uncle Remus* and his young auditor are immensely pleased when *Brer Rabbit* turns a new trick on *Brer Fox*, or when *Brer Tarrapin* claims the honors in an encounter of strength with *Brer Bar*.

Nothing is quite so delightful to the youthful in mind and the young in heart as the old uncle's mimicry of the animal calls and signals. To one whose life was spent on a plantation it will mean

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

that these sounds are echoes of a hallowed past; yet even to him who has not had this unique experience, there is enough of the universal feelings for the things of childhood and in childhood, to appreciate keenly the subtle reproductions of *Uncle Remus'* imitations.

The relations of the comedies and tragedies of this animal world have many values. Aside from the didactic purpose that is usually inherent in each, the realm of several allied interests is invaded. To the anthropologist, these folk tales carry numerous messages of worth in regard to the principles of that science; bits of interesting history can be unearthed from this mass of detail illuminating many historic incidents in the domestic life of the American negro's progenitors. In a similar relation, the psychologist finds a whole storehouse of instructive material on the question of social psychology or disputed points in genetic psychology, and numerous miscellaneous lights are shed upon its general doctrines. To the linguist and the philologist, also, these beast tales disclose fitting characters to be displayed amongst

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

exhibits of other nations and peoples evolved in the early literary and mythical history of each. From the crude predecessors now found among the inhabitants of northern Africa to the more accomplished versions in the dialect of their progeny in Georgia or the coast plantations, the connection is one fraught with varied topics of consuming interest. There is something wistful, something half-tragic, in this evidence of negro character; simplicity and good-natured childliness are here evinced constantly, and contain a message akin to the "writing on the wall" to those constructive statesmen in whose hands the future of the race is plastic.

To return to the question of scientific relationship, the tales have so many points in common with the numerous tales of ancient peoples that something more than coincidence seems to exist. It is a startling proof of the universal similitude of all mankind in the progressive march of their mental life as it is evolved from the mysterious regions of unrecorded history to the time of more elaborate annals. Mythologies, fairy tales, beast

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

tales, fables, each have their respective positions in the extensive category by the agency of which the mental growth of all mankind seems to have been linked into one comprehensive scheme of evolution. South America sends her quota of information, the several histories of the nations theirs, the American Indians theirs; each group possessing these tales for itself apparently created from some inner consciousness. The early struggles of each were similar, and in that lies much of the explanation; yet much more remains that is of interest to the scientist accustomed to dealing in hypotheses.

As a nation grows toward middle age the longing for the land of its youth has cast its charm. Within the homely narratives of Mr. Harris, the country of desire looms upon the vision in an attractive garb of fact and imagination. This, perhaps, in addition to those entertaining qualities of generosity and humor, has compelled the elder reader to pursue the stories with avidity. Enjoyment of all nature's wonders is possible within

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

your doors. Nature study is rampant. The spirit of the nation is lending itself to this wholesome desire for a return to the soil, and in so doing, demands that much of the literature should treat of the countryside. Both Ernest Thompson Seton and Joel Chandler Harris have ably responded to the call. In the essence of each is that profound love of the wilds and their inhabitants which entitles them not only to the name of author, but even of scientist in that true sense of the word. They have taught a nation's youth as well the art of appreciating natural beauties as the proper perspective for their estimation. Childhood is made a constant delight; middle age a period of continued amazement at the ever new revelations; the wisdom of old age is sweetened by a satisfied comprehension of the powers of the creator. In this same vein *Æsop's Fables* and *La Fontaine's* similar stories have amused and instructed. In *Æsop's Fables* the Hare and Tortoise have their counterparts in the repertoire of *Uncle Remus. Recruiting The King's Army*

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

is a story with a flavor of the early Roman Legions, and the army that slew each other upon the Seven Hills.

Æsop found the proper mode of presenting his story was by the means of a pithy and aphoristic sketch. The fairy tales conveyed their morals by rambling narratives of impossibility. Ernest Thompson Seton placed his story before his readers in the tales of boyhood or in the relations of a huntsman's adventures. The first dealt tersely with animals imbued with human characteristics, giving a strong emphasis to the moral side of the situation; the second was concerned with the artistry of the tale with a moral point conveyed as an incident; the third was pure nature study viewing animals as possessed of many human characteristics. In some particular each one failed in gaining a reality, however impossible the narrative itself, which would have made the moral a thing of permanence. It remained for Joel Chandler Harris to combine the various features of his predecessors, from the immortal Æsop to the present; to respond to a

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

nation's desire for stories intimate with the soil, and to transmute the whole into the semblance of reality by placing the scene on his plantation birth-place and the language in the dialect of his dusky tutors.

Joel Chandler Harris was a master, indeed, of negro dialect. And in asserting such a broad generality an exception must be noted in his companion author, Thomas Nelson Page. Mr. Page nevertheless handles a different phase of Southern life with a diverse manner of treatment. (Mr. Harris selected the ideal mode of depicting the beast tales with their humble philosophy and pathetic scheme of ethics. ~~X~~ The dialect of *Uncle Remus*, with its origin in the negro cabins of the plantation, from the lips of one of whom the phenomena of nature had come to take the place of the dogmas and tenets of religion, was the perfect instrument for the delineation of such appreciation of the animal world and human philosophy as he saw fit to present. In no annal, in no history, and in none of the various accounts of the life of the South has a more faithful series of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

dialect sketches been placed before the reader. In the time of his boyhood Harris acquired with his education the spirit of his character so thoroughly and with such remarkable feeling that he has produced as a result the most sympathetic interpretation of negro speech that Southern or any literature possesses. He caught the subtle intonations and cadences of negro speech with infinite precision; with no less skill he has made it permanent by his translation of it to the printed page.

X The use of negro dialect has afforded Joel Chandler Harris a means of treating negro character with a fullness and extension that no other writer of the South has attained. In *Uncle Remus* we see the whole realm of negro psychology unfolded in the unconscious fashion of the narrator. *Uncle Remus* was himself a type, but of a stamp whose mold was broken several decades ago. There will be no more. Thus Harris, in his function as a member of this group of *social historians*, if they may be termed thus, has done an inestimable service in preserving for

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

the historian and antiquarian, for the social philosopher and student of society, this now passing specimen of a departed life. As Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth's poetic efforts, so in like measure it is true of Joel Chandler Harris' dialect work, "It is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind."

But *Uncle Remus* does more than reveal his own character, his personal observations and criticisms. He is, moreover, the instrument of casting into violent contrast the life of his race in the new régime as against his own position of 'being a "white folks nigger." In *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings* the old man's discourse on "Race Improvement" carries a message of political import. "You slap de law onter a nigger a time er two, an' larn 'im dat he's got fer to look atter his own rashuns, an' keep out 'n udder foke's chick'n coops, an' sorter coax 'im inter de idee dat he's got ter feed 'is own chilluns, an' I be blessed ef you ain't got 'im on risin' groun'."

Scattered throughout the whole series of stories

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

in *Uncle Remus and His Friends*; *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*; *On the Plantation*; *Nights With Uncle Remus*; *Uncle Remus*; *New Stories of The Old Plantation*; there are many side lights on negro character in the person of the narrator and his interlocutors. How many, indeed, and the fullness of the spectable it is hard to realize.

When concerned in a question of fact and veracity *Uncle Remus* evinces himself to be gifted with the soul of a diplomat. It is the frequent question of the *Little Boy* to whom these stories are told whether such a state of affairs is in truth the actual case. With a scornful lift of the eye and a curling lip the old negro announces a dictum of faith worthy of a larger religious belief than that found in a myth; "En de tale I give you like hi't wer' gun ter me." That was supposed to settle the matter, and it generally did. *Uncle Remus* has caught the spirit of America sufficiently to appreciate the value of bluff. *Brother Billy Goat's Dinner* illustrates how completely that attribute has charmed him.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

No truer tale was ever published under the guise of fiction than the story of *Uncle Remus'* unconscious heroism in his *Story of the War*, in *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*. Full of a devoted patriotism, and tragedy and pathos, it stands as a specimen clear and distinct of those numerous acts of fidelity that were wont to hallow the relation of master and servant. It is here in a concrete example.

Uncle Remus defines his tales in excellent style; he is determined not to be accused of writing literature as literature. His definition of a story with a plot is unique. "Well, 'tain't ez you may say one er deze yer rag'lar up en down tales, what runs cross ways. Dish yer tale goes straight."

Uncle Remus conveys his moral lessons in the rôle of mentor to the *Little Boy*. The tale hangs usually upon some recent fault of the small auditor. The crime is never so great, however, that it cannot be wiped away by the sight of sweet cakes or "tater pie" as a gift to the old man.

The theories of Darwin, the philosophy of

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Huxley and Spencer are demolished by the sweep of *Uncle Remus'* hand. Before such unquestioning faith no theory of evolution could stand; it is settled, absolutely settled. Why, if *Brer Rabbit* once had his long and luxuriant bush frozen off in a midnight escapade, thereafter, of necessity, all of his descendants must have short or cotton tails. *Uncle Remus* also has a concise way of settling the vexed question of selection. He sees to it that *Brer Rabbit* obtains *Miss Molly Cotton Tail*, and not some other errant female of the animal realm.

No truer expression of the negro workman's policy could be found than in the story of the old man's interview with a member of the younger generation as regards the boss: "I bin up 'dar waitin' fer der boss ter come, an' now he done come, I'm a gwine down here when he'll hatter sen' atter me when he want me."

Genuine joy may not be a very material thing to strive for as an ideal, but when the object is to furnish joy gratis to hosts of others, it is easily excusable. This was the ideal of Mr. Harris.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

How well he fulfilled the rôle he set for himself grateful legions of readers will testify. His works continually afford some new pleasure because of their surpassing good nature — the ever-living interest of those several stories of which each is endowed with a perpetual festiveness. Chief of these factors in his success is the good humored criticism of life, and the pertinent suggestions as to the application of personal qualities to the solution of a happy existence. Everywhere there is the philosopher and the interpreter of the human heart. For instance, "Put a boy smellin' distance uv a piece er tater custard, an' it seem like de custard will fly up an' hit him in de mouf, no matter how much he try ter dodge."

It has been the fortune of no one of these *social historians* so skillfully to explain the attitude of the South towards the negro population as Harris has done. It was a weighty work, both politically and socially. Contrary to the lurid and rabid accounts of Southern domestic life, the stories of Mr. Harris arise as a fitting rebuke to those melodramatic falsehoods with

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

which for the last fifty years the libraries and stage have been wont to be regaled.

You may have been able to resist the spell of the ancient narrator, but the charm of Mr. Harris' plantation melodies will captivate your unwilling spirit. The religious hymns, the campmeeting songs, will be sure to arouse a lively appreciation of what difficult tasks Harris has accomplished in preserving these melodious recitals. Greatest of all are the cornshucking songs, the melodies of the plow hands, and the Christmas play songs ringing with a vigor and audacity whose enthusiasm will literally sweep you away in that ecstatic fashion of the dusky reciters themselves. The most scientific accomplishment of Harris is his production in proper form of the "Transcriptions," or songs adopted by the negroes from the whites at some remote time. As Harris says himself, "I regard them as in the highest degree characteristic."

Many of the narratives have a poetic quality. Even in their form there is something suggestive of the ballads in the early history of England and

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

Scotland. In that volume entitled *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*, the story of "How Mr. Rabbit was too sharp for Mr. Fox," there are the conventional elements of refrain, question, and response that are found in the early ballads of the Scottish border, as for instance, *Lord Randall*, and even in those later poems by accredited authors in English literature.

Again, the proverbs of *Uncle Remus* are unique. His aptitude at analyzing the situation is remarkably fine. Epigrammatic and aphoristic to a supreme degree as they should be, they embody many truths of value. He says, "Hit's a mighty deaf nigger dat don year de dinner-ho'n"; or a "Nigger wid a pocket-han'kcher better be looked atter." You are soon convinced that *Uncle Remus* is something of a cynic, as well as a pessimist, on the subject of the second generation of his race.

Joel Chandler Harris has written many fairy tales of charm and value. His characters of *Billy Biscuit and Susan* are familiar figures to all childhood. *Billy Wondercoon and His History*

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Telling Machine is a novel excuse for a series of interesting fairy tales. A moral here and a moral there with a piquant touch of humor, a dash of graceful imagination, and you have an absorbing combination.

An inquiry into the significance of Mr. Harris' position would be logical. Like the four other members of this school of *social historians* Harris has held before himself a definite mission. By mission a fruitless ideal is not designated, but a purpose vibrant with meaning. However closely analytical the literature of the Northern states may be, the South does not suffer in any particular by minute comparison. For these several authors have presented life in their own section with a masterful comprehension, grasping alike the *minutiæ* and the *panorama*. From the elemental qualities of a primitive people to the refined sentiments of a cultured community, there is no failure to depict with ability each and every phase of that particular mode of existence. In Harris' books, as in the other works of this school, there is a generous untrammeled imagina-

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

tion, the confident handling of difficult situations, that characterize the rise of a new literature of a New South, well ordered and faithfully balanced.

This group of writers had several interesting forerunners. Simms, Longstreet, and Kennedy were the pioneers in ante-bellum times. Longstreet put forth a series of entertaining stories entitled *Georgia Scenes*. Kennedy wrote *Horse-Shoe Robinson*, which was a predecessor of Charles Egbert Craddock's novels. Between Harris and Longstreet, however, came Richard Malcom Johnson. Even more pronounced than in the later work of Harris and his compeers, were the provinciality of these early authors, yet the former have arisen from this slough of sectional mannerisms and have affected the more worthy provinciality of Whittier and Burns. The superiority of these men lies in their ability to grasp life more intimately than others have done and, in so doing, they have grasped the details of existence in their community as a whole more thoroughly. As Matthew Arnold says of Tol-

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

stoi's *Anna Karénina*, "One prefers, I think, to have the novelist dealing with life which he knows from having lived it, rather than with a life he knows from books or hearsay." Harris and his fellow authors are entitled to this recommendation.

This is Joel Chandler Harris' position: A man who had the gift of appreciating the beautiful as it came in his life, and the genius to preserve his version of it all for the delight of others — who had the gracious gift of elucidating and portraying his own perfect understanding of human nature. The performing of this mission had its reward. A happy nation of children, and those who are children in heart, bear a smiling and delighted witness. As Harris has said of himself, his reward would be the laughter of a charmed audience breathing, "You have made some of us happy." He succeeded. It is a refrain that persists in echoing and reëchoing whether a critic would or no.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

In Ole Virginia, 1887.
Two Little Confederates, 1888.
On New Found River, 1891.
Eisket and Other Stories, 1892.
The Old South, 1891.
Gordon Keith, 1903.
Red Rock, 1898.
John Marvel, Assistant, 1910.
The Burial of the Guns, 1894.
Under the Crust, 1909.
Pastime Stories, 1894.
Among the Camps, 1892.
Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War, 1896.
Befor' de War (with Armistead Gordon), 1897.
Two Prisoners, 1897.
The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock, 1896.
Santa Claus Partner, 1899.
The Negro — The Southerner's Problem, 1904.
Bred in the Bone, 1905.
Captured Santa Claus, 1902.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

The Coast of Bohemia, 1906.

The Old Dominion — Her Making and Her Manners, 1908.

Robert E. Lee, The Southerner, 1908.

Tommy Trot's Visit to Santa Claus, 1908.

C. E. CRADDOCK (MISS MURFREE)

The Despot of Broomsedge Cove, 1888.

Where the Battle Was Fought, 1884.

Down the Ravine.

The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, 1884.

In the Clouds, 1886.

The Story of Keedon Bluffs, 1887

In the Stranger People's Country, 1891.

His Vanished Star, 1894.

Mystery of Witchface Mountain, 1893.

Jugglers.

The Champion.

The Young Mountaineers.

The Fair Mississippian.

The Frontiersmen.

In the Tennessee Mountains.

A Spectre of Power.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEO. W. CABLE

- “Bylow Hill.”
- “Old Creole Days.”
- “Grandissimes.”
- “Dr. Sevier.”
- “John March, Southerner.”
- “Strong Hearts.”
- “The Cavalier.”
- “Posson Jone and Pere Raphael.”
- “Bonaventure.”
- “New Orleans Before the Capture.”
- “The Dance in Place Congo.”
- “New Orleans.”
- “The Silent South.”
- “The Layman’s Hints.”
- “The Busy Man’s Bible.”
- “Strange True Stories of Louisiana.”
- Edited “Creole Slave Songs” and “West Indian Slave Insurrection.”
- Numerous Magazine articles.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

- Flute and Violin, and Other Kentucky Tales, 1891.
- John Gray, 1893.
- A Kentucky Cardinal, 1894.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Aftermath, 1895.
Summer in Arcady, 1896.
The Choir Invisible, 1897.
The Reign of Law, 1900.
The Mettle of the Pasture, 1903.
The Doctor's Christmas Gift, 1910.
The Bride of the Mistletoe, 1909.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

Balaam and His Master. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.,
1891.
Daddy Jake, The Runaway. Century Co., 1901.
Nights with Uncle Remus. Houghton, 1904.
Mingo and Other Stories. Houghton, 1887.
On the Plantation. Appleton, 1902.
On the Wing of Occasions. Doubleday, 1900.
Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings. Appleton,
1903.
Uncle Remus and His Friends. Houghton, 1900.
Free Joe and the Rest of the World. Scribners, 1898.
Little Mr. Thumble Finger. Houghton, 1894.
Mr. Rabbit at Home. Houghton, 1895.
Plantation Pageants. Houghton, 1899.
Tales of the Home Folks in Peace and War. Hough-
ton, 1898.
Aaron in the Wildwood. Houghton, 1897.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Story of Aaron. Houghton, 1896.

Chronicles of Aunt Minervy Ann. Scribners, 1899.

The Making of a Statesman. McClure, Phillips Co., 1902.

Gabriel Tolliver. McClure, Phillips Co., 1902.

Georgia, from the Invasion of De Soto to Recent Times. Appleton, 1896.

Little Union Scout. McClure, Phillips Co., 1904.

Tar Baby and Other Rimes of Uncle Remus. Appleton, 1904.

Told by Uncle Remus; New Stories of the Old Plantation. McClure, Phillips Co., 1903.

Billy Wondercoon and the History Telling Machine. McClure, Phillips Co., 1903.

BOOKS ON SOUTHERN LITERATURE

American Authors — Mildred L. Rutherford, Atlanta. Geo. Franklin Pub. Co., 1899.

The South in History and Literature, *Ibid.*, 1907.

Living Writers of the South — J. W. Davidson, Carlton, N. Y.

Southern Writers — W. M. Baskerville. Barbee & Smith, Nashville, Tenn., 1891.

History of Southern Literature — Carl Holliday, Neale 1906.

Library of Southern Literature, Bibliography, 1910.

APPENDIX.

CRITICAL AUTHORITY REFERRED TO IN GEORGE W. CABLE:

I. "Il avait horreur de la critique systématique, qui enferme le critique lui-même dans les formules toujours trop hâtivement arrêtées et toujours trop étroites et qui forcent presque à prononcer au moins 'in petto,' le judgement, avant d'avoir étudié le procès. . . . Il avait l'amour de la vie, et le don de la vie. Il voulait voir vivre et sentir vivre, comme dans commerce intime, le personnage qu'il étudiat et il vivait lui-même devant son lecteur d'une vie ardente de recherche à la fois fiéver-euse et sagace."

— "Langue et Litterature Francaise," Vol. 7. Dix-Neuvieme Siecle, pp. 665-6.

II. "La question de l'art pour l'art. — En quoi l'art diffère absolument de la science. — Comment les conditions memes de l'art l'empêchent de se séparer de la vie."

— "L'Evolution de la Poésie Lyrique," Tome I. Brunetière, p. I.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS
TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY:

A NOTE TO JAMES LANE ALLEN.

W. K. Doty,

Lately Editor-in-Chief,
University of Virginia Magazine.

Through the efforts of John Filson, the first historian of Kentucky, Lexington became the permanent home of the institution in 1788, where it began its career as Transylvania Seminary in June of the next year, and where it held in 1790 the first College Commencement in the Mississippi Valley.

On September the first, 1791, the Reverend James Moore, who has been immortalized in several of Mr. James Lane Allen's stories, was elected President, or Master as the office was then called. Three years later the Reverend Harry Toulmin (ancestor of the author) succeeded him. Mr. Toulmin was a Baptist Minister from Virginia, a personal friend of Mr. Jefferson, who strongly recommended him, and a man of great activity. He was an author, and a prominent man politically, becoming afterwards Secretary of State under Governor James Garrard. In addition he published a digest of the

APPENDIX

laws of Kentucky, and was made a United States Judge in the territory of Alabama. Because of his strong Unitarian views the Presbyterians withdrew their patronage from Transylvania Seminary, and established Kentucky Academy. Mr. Moore was at the head of this for a time, but was re-elected to the head of Transylvania Seminary to succeed Mr. Toulmin, who resigned.

Friends of these rival schools at length brought about a reconciliation between them, and on November 2nd, 1798, the union of Transylvania Seminary and Kentucky Academy was agreed upon by the trustees and the two boards drew up the union on the next day, which was consummated by an act of the State Legislature on December 22, 1798, the natal day of Transylvania University, the first institution of higher education in the Mississippi Valley, or west of the Alleghanies.

The Reverend James Moore was the first President of the University, as he had been first Minister of the First Episcopal Church in Kentucky or west of the mountains. After the war an attempt was made to make it the State University and in pursuance of that effort the name was changed to Kentucky University, but the plan was not successful, and in 1908 the old name of so many associations was restored, and Transylvania stands to-day pre-eminent in Kentucky.

SOCIAL HISTORIANS

Most conspicuous of the eras of this old University have been those under the control of Reverend James Moore, Horace Halley, Henry B. Bascom, and John B. Bowman, who were presidents at intervals along its romantic course. It would be impossible to give in this note all of the illustrious names associated with Transylvania University. Mr. Allen has used many of them in his charming stories, in which Transylvania is inextricably interwoven, for it seems that every great name of Kentucky is connected also with her oldest University.

Universit
trend Jim
and John B
along the
ive in the
with Chas
y of their
a is inex
reat name
University.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 00555 6389

